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## Abstracts

### Sūrdās: poet and text in the Sikh tradition

JEEVAN DEOL

A single line by the poet Sūrdās occurs in the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*. This paper is concerned with the textual representation of the single line, given as a full *pada* in certain manuscript traditions of the *Granth*, and with early Sikh writing on the figure of Sūrdās. The paper also considers other works associated with Sūrdās in texts from Punjab, including a second composition in the *Granth* seemingly attributed to both Sūrdās and the fifth Sikh Guru Arjan. The paper raises a number of issues relating to the *Adi Granth* Sūrdās and the early writing on him, particularly the relationship between the Sikh Gurus and the *bhagats*, early Sikh conceptions of the *Adi Granth* and the importance of the writing of heterodox groups within the *Panth* for the study of early Sikh exegesis.

### A literary stylistic analysis of a poem by the Somali poet Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye 'Qaasim'

MARTIN ORWIN

This article presents a stylistic analysis of the popular poem *Macaan iyo Qadhaadh* by the Somali poet Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye 'Qaasim'. Following a brief review of literature and an outline of style in Somali poetry, the creative use of language is discussed, for example the use of deixis and syntax. The obligatory stylistic characteristics of Somali poetry, metre and alliteration, are also discussed as they appear in the poem and are presented as being not something to be merely adhered to but as aspects which are creatively manipulated to contribute to the power and meaning of the poem. Enjambement plays a role particularly in the discussion of prolongation in the poem which is dealt with in some depth.

### The 'Uqūd rasm al-muftī of Ibn 'Ābidīn

NORMAN CALDER

This article focuses on Ibn 'Ābidīn's poem, 'Chaplets on the mufti's task', a translation of which is provided in Section III. It begins with a discussion of John Dryden's didactic poem, 'A layman's faith', in an attempt both to contrast the English Protestantism represented here with Ibn 'Ābidīn's traditional Sunnism, and also to highlight the common prejudices of modern scholarship in its perception of pre-modern Islam. Section II locates the context of Ibn 'Ābidīn's poem in relation to his other works and the corpus of writings on *iftā'*. Section IV offers an analysis of the 'Chaplets', which divides the poem into a set of rules of justification followed by further rules for the discovery of the law, and highlights its system of ranking past authorities and canonical texts, one which continues to accommodate, to a certain extent, the needs of later generations.

### The Kipchak connection: the Ilkhans, the Mamluks, and Ayn Jalut

CHARLES J. HALPERIN

Before the battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260, the Ilkhan Hulegu insulted the Mamluk Sultan Qutuz's 'base' and refugee origins. Qutuz, from Khwarizm, may not have been a Kipchak, but his successor Baybars certainly was, and Kipchaks were the dominant ethnic element in the Egyptian Mamluk corps. The Mongols had invoked the supposed status of the Kipchaks as Mongol 'slaves' as an excuse to fight the East Slavs in 1223 and Hungary in 1237. It is plausible that the Ilkhans recognized the Mamluks as Kipchaks, former subjects of their Mongol rival, the Golden Horde, and that this factor influenced their stubborn attempts to conquer Syria even after their defeat at Ayn Jalut. The Kipchaks, a widespread but disunified congeries of tribes and clans before the

Mongol conquest of the western Eurasian steppe, did not disappear immediately after their submission and did not assimilate within the Golden Horde as quickly as usually thought. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they continued to influence events within the Mongol Empire, its successor states, especially Yuan China, and their neighbours as far afield as Egypt, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Mpu Panuluh's puzzling *Panakawans*: do clown-servants feature in the Old Javanese *kakawin Gatotkacâsraya*?

EDWIN WIERINGA

The earliest account of the well-known love story of Abimanyu and Ksiti Sundari seems to be the Old Javanese *kakawin Gatotkacâsraya* ('Gatotkaca's help'), said to be composed by mpu Panuluh in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. In secondary literature the *Gatotkacâsraya* owes its fame to the allegedly first appearance of three so-called *panakawans*, viz. Juru dyah, Punta and Prasanta. The modern concept of *panakawans* in the *wayang* (puppet theatre), in which they perform the role of clown-servants, however, has played tricks on most scholars who have hitherto dealt with the *Gatotkacâsraya*. In this article it is argued that the *panakawans* in this text are only followers and companions of Abimanyu; Juru dyah is not a personal name but a function, whereas Punta and Prasanta may well be later Balinese additions to the text.

Towards the Afro-Asiatic etymology of Egyptian *zš* 'to write'

GÁBOR TAKÁCS

The paper examines a new possibility for the etymology of Egyptian *zš* 'to write/to paint'. After a careful critical appraisal of previous suggestions, the present paper offers a new approach to both the semantic and phonological aspects of the etymology of Egyptian *zš*. The comparative linguistic evidence discussed in detail leads us to conclude that Egyptian *zš* (regular from an earlier *\*zḥ*) meant primarily *\*'to paint red'* and finds its hopeful cognates in Berber *\*-zway* 'red' and Omotic *\*zok*—'red'. The paper was presented at the 25th North American Conference on Afro-Asiatic Linguistics in Miami on 22 March 1997.

Two Aramaic legal documents

T. KWASMAN

The origins of Aramaic common law formularies can be traced back to cuneiform forerunners. Neo-Assyrian legal formularies in particular had a strong influence on Aramaic in the seventh century B.C. Actual legal texts from this period written in Aramaic are rather uncommon. Thus the more texts that come to light the more we are able to establish how cuneiform legal formularies were adapted and employed by Aramaic scribes. The two Aramaic legal clay tablets published here provide us with such information. They attest to what is known as 'the Aramaic-Assyrian symbiosis' and the use of Assyrian legal procedure in the Ancient Near East of the seventh century B.C.



# Sūrdās: poet and text in the Sikh tradition<sup>1</sup>

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Pre-twentieth century Sikh tradition says that Bhāi Gurdās, the scribe of Guru Arjan's text of the *Adi Granth*, was troubled by a major doubt as he wrote the words the Guru dictated to him: faced with poems attributed to figures like Kabīr and Nāmdev (collectively known as *bhagats* in the tradition), Gurdās began to wonder whether Guru Arjan was not composing the poems himself and ascribing them to the *bhagats*. Realizing what was troubling Bhāi Gurdās, the Guru instructed the scribe to rise early the next morning and wait outside the tent where the dictation of the *Granth* took place every day. When he did, Gurdās was surprised to see the Guru conversing with a number of the *bhagats* in 'spiritual form'. The *bhagats*, it turned out, came to the tent every morning to ensure that their compositions were included in Guru Arjan's *Granth*. Gurdās was suitably impressed by the display and acknowledged without further question the authenticity of their compositions.<sup>2</sup>

This story, not included in twentieth-century accounts of the compilation of the *Adi Granth*, encapsulates an earlier Sikh debate about the 'authenticity' and sources of the compositions of the *bhagats* in the *Granth* that continued in various forms into the twentieth century. While some early traditional commentators continued to suggest that Guru Arjan was in fact the author of the *bhagat* texts, most Sikh writing this century has focused on the issue of which Sikh Guru was responsible for collecting and compiling the *bhagats'* compositions.<sup>3</sup> As a result, very little attention has been paid either to comparative issues arising from the corpora of the *bhagats'* works outside the *Adi Granth* or to early Sikh writing on the lives of the *bhagats*. One of the textual issues which has attracted some attention in Sikh writing on the *bhagats* is the single line attributed to Sūrdās in the *Sāranga rāga* section of the *Adi Granth*, found as an entire *pada* in some manuscript traditions. A second *pada* (called

<sup>1</sup> Research and writing of the final stage of this paper were funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. Neither body is responsible for the views expressed in the text. The *Adi Granth* manuscripts at Takht Sri Harimandir Sahib, Patna were seen there in November 1998; I would like to thank S. S. Ahluwalia and Dr Mohinder Singh of New Delhi for making access to the texts possible. Dr Darshan Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala and Prof. Kenneth Bryant of the University of British Columbia kindly read and commented on earlier drafts of the paper. Proper names of historical individuals have been transliterated in their modern Punjabi or Hindi forms. Common terms such as the names of the Sikh Gurus and the *Adi Granth* have not been given diacritics, while quotations from texts, titles of pre-twentieth century texts and literary terms have been given in their 'premodern' forms with 'silent' *a* (excepting *shabad*, which is given in its modern Punjabi form). Other terms are transliterated in their modern Punjabi forms. In accordance with the general usage for the transliteration of Punjabi, I have used *ch*, *chh* and *sh* for the characters usually represented in Indological transcriptions as *c*, *ch* and *ś* respectively. Unless otherwise noted, all dates are C.E.

<sup>2</sup> For versions of this legend, see: Sarūpdās Bhallā, *Mahimā prakāsha* (1776), ed. Gobind Singh Lamba and Khazan Singh, 2 vols. (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1970–71), 2: 369–71; Santokh Singh, *Srī Gura pratāpa sūraja grantha* (1844), ed. Bhāi Vir Singh, 14 vols, 4th ed. (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1963), 6: 2089–92 (*rāsi* 3.42.1–27); Bhagat Singh, *Gurabilāsa Pātashāhī-6 kṛita Bhagata Singha* (ca. 1834–44), ed. Gurmukh Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1997), 128–30 (4: 250–9). The story is also represented in nineteenth-century wall paintings in shrines such as Gurdwārā Bābā Aṭal in Amritsar.

<sup>3</sup> For the argument that the compositions were collected by Guru Nanak, see Sāhib Singh, *Ādi bīr bāre* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1970). For the argument that the collection was done by Guru Amardas, see Giānī Gurditt Singh, *Itihās Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib: Bhagat bānī bhāg* (Chandigarh: Sikh Sāhit Sansthan, 1990) and Gurinder Singh Mann, *The Goindval Pothis: the earliest extant source of the Sikh canon* (Harvard Oriental Series, 51.) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).



a *shabad* in Sikh tradition) in the same *rāga* carries the *chhāpa* (poetic signature) of Sūrdās but is attributed to Guru Arjan. The issue of who the Sūrdās of the Adi Granth is has not, however, been dealt with in Sikh writing; indeed, one is hard-pressed to find references to Sūrdās in mainstream Sikh writing until the issue of the *pada* assumes a new importance in the nineteenth century. Further, the textual history of the Granth indicates that the full version of the Sūrdās *pada* is a relatively late addition to manuscripts of the Granth and that the second *shabad* in Sāranga *rāga* is more safely attributed to Guru Arjan than to Sūrdās himself. It would seem, then, that the problem of Sūrdās's presence in the Adi Granth is no more than a minor textual issue. But a deeper look at the Sūrdās of the Adi Granth provides a window both into issues of intertextuality in the Adi Granth and into the history of the way the Sikh Panth has looked at the text of the Granth itself during different periods of its history. In short, then, the textual problem of Sūrdās's representation in the Sikh tradition opens up wider issues in the history of both the Sikh Panth and the Adi Granth.

### *Sūrdās outside the Sikh Panth*

The most famous Sūrdās in north Indian devotional traditions is the blind Kṛṣṇa poet from Braj (the region around Mathura and Agra) who is best known as the author of a voluminous collection of Kṛṣṇa poems known as the *Sūrasāgara*.<sup>4</sup> The traditional hagiographical portrait of this Sūrdās is ultimately descended from the *Chaurāsī Vaiṣṇavana ki Vārtā*, a text compiled in the seventeenth century by Harirāy, an adherent of the Vallabh *sampradāya*.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Vārtā*'s decidedly sectarian viewpoint, Sūr's life divides itself neatly into two parts, a base period of *nirguṇa* devotion and a fruitful period of attachment to the *saguṇa bhakti* of the Vallabh *sampradāya*. During his brief *nirguṇa* phase, Sūrdās lived in Gaughāṭ, midway on the Yamuna river between Mathura and Agra, where he became famed for his songs of devotion. One day, the great teacher Vallabhāchārya came from the south and effected a conversion in Sūr's life, initiating him into *saguṇa* devotion and teaching him to sing the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa. After this, Sūrdās began to sing *kīrtana* before the image of Shrīnāthjī in the main Vallabhite temple of Mathura, thus sealing his allegiance to the sect. At one point, the Emperor Akbar heard one of Sūrdās's *padas* and summoned the poet to meet him; unfazed, Sūr spurned the Emperor's offers of patronage and curtly warned Akbar never to bother him again. Sūrdās continued to sing for Shrīnāthjī until his death, singing a total of one hundred thousand *padas*, a number which was supposedly supplemented by twenty-five thousand poems that Kṛṣṇa himself composed for Sūrdās in the last days of his life. The *chhappaya* in Nābhādās's famed mid-seventeenth century *Bhaktamāla* traditionally taken to refer to this Sūrdās concentrates on the beauty and technical merit of his poetry, as does a stanza in the Dādūpanthī Rāghavdās's *Bhaktamāla* (probably 1660).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For an edition of the *Sūrasāgara*, see Jagannāthdās 'Ratnākar' et al. (ed.), *Sūrasāgara*. 2 vols, 4th ed. (Benares: Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 2021–26 VS/1964–69).

<sup>5</sup> John Stratton Hawley, *Sur Das: poet, singer, saint* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 7. Hindi editions of the *Vārtā* include: Dvārakādās Pārikh (ed.), *Chaurāsī Vaiṣṇavana ki vārtā* (Mathura: Shri Bajrang Pustakālay, 1970) and Premnarāyan Tandan (ed.), *Sūrdās ki vārtā* (Lucknow: Nandan Prakashan, 1968). An English translation of the Sūrdās *vārtā*, without the inserted poems, is contained in Richard Barz, *The Bhakti sect of Vallabhacarya* (Faridabad: Thompson Press, 1976), 105–39.

<sup>6</sup> Nābhādās, *Bhaktamāla*, *chhappaya* 73 published as *Shrīnābhādāsājīkṛt Shrībhaktamāla Shrīpriyādāsājīkṛt Bhaktirasabodhinī tīkā sahī* (Bombay: Gangāviṣṇu Shrikrīṣṇadās Prakāśhan, 1989), 83; Rāghavdās kṛt *Bhaktamāla* (*Chaturdās kṛt tīkā sahī*), ed. Agarchand Nāhtā. Rājasthān Purāṭan Granthmālā, no. 78 (Jodhpur: Rājasthān Prāchyavidyā Pratisthān, 1965),

Madanmohan Sūrdās, the second major Sūrdās of sectarian traditions, is associated not with the temples of Braj but with the Mughal administration of Avadh.<sup>7</sup> A manuscript of Sūrdās poems dated 1624 contains a poem with the *chhāpa* Sūrdās Madanmohan, and Nābhādās mentions a Madanmohan Sūrdās renowned for his devotion to the *līlā* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.<sup>8</sup> Priyādās's *Bhaktirasabodhinī* commentary on the text (1769 VS/1712) expands the reference in Nābhādās's text to a considerable degree:

Sūrdās was blind but his eyes remained fixed on the *līlā*. He was a Brahman by birth and became *amīn* of Saṇḍīlā (in Avadh). One day he saw a fine type of *gur* (unrefined sugar) being sold in the market and had it sent to the temple of Madangopal in Vrindaban. Although the deity had already been put to sleep, he appeared to his attendants in a dream and commanded them to serve him the *gur*.

Once Sūrdās composed a *pada* in which he called himself 'guardian of the *sants*' shoes'. A devotee learnt the text and decided to test Sūrdās by asking him to guard his shoes while he went into the temple. Even when the Lord sent his servants to call Sūrdās into the temple, he refused to leave the shoes and go inside.

Sūrdās spent all the revenue of his district on feeding *sādhūs*. When the emperor Akbar's men came to collect the money, he filled the chest with stones and a letter explaining his conduct and ran away in the middle of the night. The emperor's *divān* Ṭoḍar Mal had him imprisoned. Sūrdās wrote a *dohā* in prison that affected Akbar, who had him released. After this, Sūrdās went to Vrindaban, where he composed poetry that gained him great fame. His *iṣṭa* was Madanmohan and his *guru* 'Āchārya Mahāprabhu'.<sup>9</sup>

The Dādūpanthī Rāghav's *Bhaktamāla* praises Madanmohan Sūrdās for the singing of Rām in the midst of his governmental responsibilities, while a commentary on the text by Chaturdās dated 1800 narrates the same story as that given by Priyādās.<sup>10</sup>

The third Sūrdās known to us from pre-modern writings is even more strongly associated with the Mughal court than Madanmohan Sūrdās, although as a singer rather than as an administrator. Shaykh Abu'l-Fazl's *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, an administrative account of Akbar's court completed in 1596–97, lists among the prominent singers at court 'Sur Das, son of Babu Ram Das' from Gwalior, while 'Abdul Qādir al-Badāyūnī's *Muntakhab ut-tawārīkh*, completed in

133–34 (*mūl* 263–5). Although Winand M. Callewaert dates the text to 1777 VS/1720 ('Dadu and the Dadupanth: the sources' in W. H. McLeod and Karine Schomer (ed.), *The Sants: studies in a devotional tradition of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 186), the colophon of the text bears the date 1717 VS/1660 (246, *mūl* 555). The colophon's date is at least somewhat misleading, since the account of the Sikh Gurus given in the *mūl* text goes up to the eighth Guru Harikrishan (176, *mūl* 348), who became Guru in 1661 and died in 1664.

<sup>7</sup> A Persian '*arzdash*t' dated 27 Rabi' us-sānī 994 A.H. (7 April 1568) contains the complaint of an individual named Sūrdās that one *qāzī* 'Abdur Razzāq of Saṇḍīlā has denied him a *madad-i ma'āsh* grant in Mahsoyah by placing the relevant land in the *khālīshah* (National Archives of India, New Delhi, acc. no. 1438). It is unclear whether this Sūrdās is the same person as the Mughal administrator of the hagiographies.

<sup>8</sup> Hawley, *Sur Das*, 23; Nābhādās, *Bhaktamāla*, 127 (*chhappaya* 126).

<sup>9</sup> Priyādās, *Bhaktirasabodhinī*, verses 498–502 published as Nābhādās, *Bhaktamāla*, 128–9. The title 'Āchārya Mahāprabhu' is used for both Vallabha and Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya by their respective adherents. Since Priyādās begins his text with an invocation to Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya, it is likely that he is meant here.

<sup>10</sup> Rāghavdās, *Bhaktamāla*, 119–20 (*mūl* 236–7, *īkā* 361–5).



1590–91, states that the singer Rām Dās was from Lucknow.<sup>11</sup> This reference has led some to conclude that the poet of the *Sūrasāgara* served the court of Akbar, although we have no conclusive evidence to link the two figures.<sup>12</sup> Unless further evidence is forthcoming, we must therefore speak of two well-known pre-modern north Indian Kṛṣṇa poets named Sūrdās and a court singer of unknown sectarian affiliation.

### *Sūrdās in Sikh writings*

According to the most common modern story in the Sikh Panth, Sūrdās was a contemporary of Guru Arjan living somewhere outside Punjab who heard about the compilation of the Adi Granth and set off for Punjab to ensure that his works were included in it. When the blind poet reached Rāmsar (the spot near Amritsar where Guru Arjan was dictating the Adi Granth), Guru Arjan was soliciting *bhagat* compositions in Sāranga *rāga*. Sūrdās began to sing one of his poems, but he entered deep *samādhi* after only one line. As a testimony to Sūrdās's devotion, Guru Arjan included Sūr's single line and a *shabad* of his own using Sūr's *chhāpa* in the Sāranga section of the Granth.<sup>13</sup> This story, commonly used to explicate the anomalous single line in the Adi Granth, does not appear in written form before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Normative Sikh traditions before the twentieth century are almost totally silent about Sūrdās and the single line attributed to him in the Granth; the textual issue only gains some prominence when the Panth begins to rethink the relationship between various recensions of the Adi Granth in the nineteenth century.

Twentieth-century Sikh scholarship links the Sūrdās of the Adi Granth with Sūrdās Madanmohan. According to Kāhn Singh's standard reference work the *Mahān Kosh* (first published in 1931), Sūrdās was:

Madanmohan the Brahman, also known as Sūrdās. Born *samvat* 1586; scholar of Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit. First he was Akbar's administrator of district Saṇḍilā in Awadh, then he became a *sādhū*. His *samādhi* is near Kashi. His *bānī* is in *Śrī Gurū Granth Sāhib*.

The same citation identifies the famed author of the *Sūrasāgara* as 'the son of Bābā Rāmdās of Braj'.<sup>14</sup> Most modern Sikh writers echo Kāhn Singh's opinion, one author in particular adding two episodes to his account of the poet's life: the first outlining his generosity to *sādhūs* and *atīts* and its fatal effect on his career as an administrator, the second explaining his blindness as the result of his having picked out his own eyes for the crime of looking with lustful eyes at a married woman.<sup>15</sup> The first story resembles an episode in the *janama-sākhīs* of Guru Nanak's life. Like the story explaining the appearance of only

<sup>11</sup> Abu'l Fazl 'Allāmī, *The Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, tr. J. Blochmann, ed. D. C. Phillot, 2nd. ed. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927), 682. Badāyūnī states that Rām Dās of Lucknow was a musician at the court of Islām Shāh Sūrī in Delhi, see W. H. Lowe, (tr.), *Muntakhab ut-tavārikh*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: ASB, 1924), 2: 37.

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Vaudeville, *Pastorales par Soir-dās* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 35–7.

<sup>13</sup> See for example the commentary on the single line in *Ādi Śrī Gurū Granth Sāhib jī saṭik (Farīdkoṭ vālā īkā)*, 4th ed. (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1992), 4: 2552. The commentary was written by Giānī Badan Singh Sekhvā in 1883 and subsequently revised by a panel of traditional scholars.

<sup>14</sup> Kāhn Singh Nābhā, *Gurushabad ratnākar Mahān kosh* (1931) (Delhi: National Bookshop, 1990), 225.

<sup>15</sup> Giānī Gurditt Singh, *Itihās*, 325, 329. The second addition appears to be the result of a misreading of Rāghavdās's account of the south Indian *bhakta* Bilvamangal: verses 263–4 of the *mūl* about Sūrdās are followed by one verse of *mūl* about Bilvamangal and 12 verses of commentary that tell his story (Rāghavdās, *Bhaktamāla*, 133–5). Gurditt Singh seems not to have realized that Bilvamangal was a separate individual. It may also be that Gurditt Singh has followed Giān Singh's *Gurmatī anusāra bhagatamālā* (see below).



the single line in the standard version of the *Adi Granth*, this definitive identification of the *Sūrdās* of Sikh tradition appears to be relatively recent, most probably a development of nineteenth-century commentaries on Hindi *bhaktamāla* texts.<sup>16</sup>

Pre-eighteenth century Sikh literature is largely silent on the subject of *Sūrdās*. Seventeenth-century texts which contain some reference to the *bhagats* include the *Adi Granth*, *Bhāi Gurdās's Vāras*, a text on the lives of the *bhagats* entitled *Prema ambodha*, and the *janamasākhīs* of Guru Nanak's life. Although the *Adi Granth* itself mentions a number of legendary figures and nine medieval *bhagats* (Dhannā, Trilochan, Beṇī, Saiṇ, Kabīr, Nāmdev and Ravidās), none of its contributors mention *Sūrdās*.<sup>17</sup> *Bhāi Gurdās*, whose poetic compositions often explicate the *Adi Granth*, does not mention *Sūrdās* either.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, *Prema ambodha*, a verse biography of legendary and historical *bhagats* composed in 1696 and the only major independent mainstream Sikh text on the *bhagats*, does not contain an account of *Sūrdās*.<sup>19</sup> The *janamasākhīs* of Guru Nanak's life, which appear to have taken their first written form before 1640,<sup>20</sup> offer no further clues: they do not mention *Sūrdās*, although some of them narrate meetings between Nanak and other figures from the devotional traditions of north India (primarily Kabīr and the successors of Farīd). Apparently, then, the early Panth did not associate *Sūrdās* with Nanak, although the evidence of the sixteenth-century 'Goindvāl *pothīs*' (discussed below) seems to indicate that some sections of the Panth may have associated the *bhagats* as a group or Nāmdev and Kabīr with the early Gurus.<sup>21</sup> *Sūrdās's* first appearance in Sikh writings is in the *Gurabilāsa* texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *Gurabilāsa* texts concentrate on narrating the lives of the later Gurus, and those that deal with the fifth and the tenth Gurus focus attention on the compilation and recompilation of the *Adi Granth*. Written at a time when segments of the Panth seem to have been debating the claims to authenticity of various recensions of the *Adi Granth*,<sup>22</sup> the texts touch on the issue of the contents of and contributors to the *Granth*. *Sarūpdās Bhallā's*

<sup>16</sup> The *bhaktamāla* format seems, however, to have had a certain degree of influence on pre-modern Sikh literature: an eighteenth-century prose commentary on *Bhāi Gurdās's* eleventh *vāra* on pre-eminent Sikhs of the first six Gurus bears the title *Sikkhā dī bhagatamālā*. The text has been published as Tarlochan Singh Bedī (ed.), *Sikkhā dī bhagatamālā* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> For examples of compositions which mention the *bhagats*, see Sirirāgu M3 22 (p. 76); Sūhī M4 8 (p. 733); Bilāvalu M4 7 (p. 835); Asā Dhannā M5 1 (pp. 487–8); Basantu M5 *gharu* 1 *duktā* 1 (p. 1192); Sārangu M5 18 (p. 1207); Kala, *Savayye Mahale Pahale ke* 8 (p. 1390); Jālapa, *Savayye Mahale Tije ke* 13 (p. 1394).

<sup>18</sup> *Bhāi Gurdās, Vārā Bhāi Guradāsa (sompādan ate pāth-nirdhāran)*, ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggī (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1987); *Kabitta savaiye Bhāi Guradāsa: pāth, tuk-tatkarā, anukramanikā ate kosh*, ed. Oankār Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> *Prema ambodha pothī*, ed. Devindar Singh Usāhaṇ (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1989). On the basis of rather flimsy internal evidence, Usāhaṇ attributes the text to an author named Kevaldās. He also notes that many manuscripts of the work attribute it to Guru Gobind Singh. Some have claimed on the basis of a couplet available in only two of the 33 manuscripts used in his edition that it is by Guru Gobind Singh's court scribe Haridās (ibid., 2–3).

<sup>20</sup> See the text published as Ratan Singh Jaggī and Gursharan Kaur Jaggī, ed., *Purātan janamasākhī* (Patiala: Pavittar Pramāṇik Prakāshan, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> In his description of one of the two extant volumes said to comprise the 'Goindval *pothīs*', Pritam Singh notes four headings of *shabads* that refer to Kabir and Nāmdev as '*bhagats* of Bābā' (most likely Guru Nanak, although the term is also used in the headings of the *pothī* to refer to Guru Amardas); it is clear from his table of headings in the volume as a whole that the pairing of Kabir and Nāmdev is used in the manuscript to mean the *bhagats* as a group, see Pritam Singh, ed., *Ahīāpur vālī pothī (Bābā Mohan jī vālī jā Goindvāl vālī pahlī pothī)*, vol. 1 (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1998), 288–95. Gurditt Singh argues somewhat improbably on the basis of these headings that Kabir and Nāmdev were followers of Guru Nanak (*Itihās*, 565).

<sup>22</sup> See Pashaura Singh, 'The text and meaning of the *Adi Granth*' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1991), 81–91. For the recensions of the *Adi Granth*, see below.



*Mahimā prakāsha* (1776), Santokh Singh's *Srī Gura pratāpa sūraja grantha* (1844) and Bhagat Singh's *Gurabilāsa Pātashālī Chhevi* (ca. 1843–44) all mention Sūrdās as one of the poets whose works were included in the *Adi Granth* as compiled by Guru Arjan, but none offer any further information on him.<sup>23</sup>

If mainstream Sikh sources are largely silent about Sūrdās, the literature of 'heterodox' sects holds out the possibility of clarifying to some degree the pre-modern Sikh identification of Sūrdās. The Mīnās, a group that originated with Guru Arjan's elder brother Prithī Chand, was a community with its own gurus, shrines, and exegetical literature.<sup>24</sup> An eighteenth-century text by Harijī, the eighth guru of the line,<sup>25</sup> implies that stories about the *bhagats*' lives were very important to Mīnā scriptural exegesis. The *Gosati Gurū Miharabāna* (1750) places the beginnings of Mīnā exegetical writing in the discourses compiled by Miharbān, the group's seventh guru:

And Sri Satgurūjī [Miharbān] began to speak of the death of the *bhagats* twenty-four hours a day ... and read *gosatis* (discourses). And [he] compiled them, too. And all the *gosatis* of the Gurus and *bhagats* were written in the guru's lifetime ... First came the *gosatis* of *gusāi* Kabīr, then all the others ... And [Miharbān] explained the reasons behind all the *shabads* by all the Gurus and all the *bhagats*.<sup>26</sup>

While we cannot be certain exactly which texts Harijī refers to in this passage, it is probable that the *gosatis* of Kabīr and the Gurus were versions or portions of the extant Mīnā *Janamasākhī Srī Gurū Nānaka Deva jī* and *Janamasākhī Bhagata Kabīra jī*.<sup>27</sup> Miharbān's tradition of exegesis was continued in later Mīnā works, many of which are still in manuscript form. The earliest Mīnā works to mention Sūrdās are Miharbān's seventeenth-century verse *Sukhamanī sahasranāmā* and Harijī's prose commentary on the text, *Paramārtha sukhamanī sahasranāmā* (1703 VS/1646–47). Both contain only a brief reference to Sūrdās, Miharbān's text listing his name among the *bhagats* of Kaliyuga and Harijī's commentary merely noting that he had a vision of Ṭhākūrjī because he sang the *saguṇa līlā*.<sup>28</sup> A mid- to late seventeenth century collection of exegetical *gosatis* about *bhagats*, Sufis and Nāths contains a lengthy *gosati* on Sūrdās entitled *Kathā Sūra gusāi kī*.<sup>29</sup> Based on an exegesis of four *padas*, the *gosati* narrates the following episode:

One day Sūr was sitting in contemplation and sang a *pada* to Ṭhākūrjī in Dhanāsarī *rāga*. Lamenting the fact that others had been saved who had committed fewer bad acts than him, Sūr sang a *pada* in Sāranga *rāga*. He then decided to ask for new eyes and sang another *pada* in Naṭa *rāga*. Ṭhākūrjī came to Sūr and told him to utter the words, '*Rāma Kishana*'.

<sup>23</sup> Santokh Singh, *Gura pratāpa sūraja*, 6:2087 (*rāsi* 3.41.47); Sarūpdās Bhallā, *Mahimā prakāsha*, 2:371; Bhagat Singh, *Gurabilāsa*, 129 (*adhyāya* 4:255).

<sup>24</sup> See Jeevan Deol, 'The Mīnās and their literature', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118/2, April–June 1998, 172–84.

<sup>25</sup> Since the Mīnās recognized the first five Sikh Gurus, Prithī Chand was their sixth guru, his son Miharbān their seventh, his grandson Harijī their eighth, and so on. The Mīnā gurus will be referred to according to this numbering scheme in the text of the paper.

<sup>26</sup> Harijī, *Gosati Gurū Miharabāna*, ed. Govindnāth Rājguru (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1974), 336.

<sup>27</sup> *Janamasākhī Srī Gurū Nānaka Deva jī likhita Srī Miharbāna jī*, ed. Kirpal Singh and Shamsheer Singh 'Ashok'. 2 vols. (Amritsar: Khalsa College, 1962–69); *Janamasākhī Bhagata Kabīra jī kī (mūlpāth te vivechan)*, ed. Narindar Kaur Bhāṭṭā (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Krishna Kumari Bansal, 'A critical and comprehensive editing of Sahansar Nam Mala by Harijī' (Ph.D. thesis, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1976), 638 (Miharbān) and 674 (Harijī).

<sup>29</sup> Bhasha Vibhag, Patiala ms. 359. For an edition of another of the texts in the volume, see Sant Indar Singh 'Chakravarti' (ed.), *Masle Shekh Pharid ke* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1962).



When he did so, Sūr was granted a vision of Ṭhākurjī. Sūr expressed a wish to test Him, and Ṭhākurjī promised to grant Sūr whatever he asked for. Sūr sang a *pada* in Dhanāsarī and asked for salvation, which he received.

Sūr's vision of Ṭhākurjī gave him the ability to see his previous lives, and he remembered both what he had done in Dvāparayuga and the punishment he had received for his actions. Since he had been punished for casting lustful glances, he began to fear that if he were given back his eyes they might betray him again. Ṭhākurjī was pleased and gave Sūr the ability to see the three worlds. He told Sūr to ask for anything he wanted. Sūr asked for the boons of *nāma simarana* (remembrance of the Name) and singing Ṭhākurjī's qualities, both of which he was granted. Sūr asked Ṭhākurjī whether he should sing of His *nirguṇa* form or his *sagūṇa* form, and Ṭhākurjī told him that He would be pleased with either. Sūr began to contemplate both forms. He lived in Mathura and sang extensively of the *sagūṇa līlā*.<sup>30</sup>

The substance of this early *gosaṭi* forms the basis of the most extensive reference to Sūrdās in the Mīnā tradition, found in the works of Darbārī Dās, a disciple of the twelfth Mīnā guru Abhai Rām. His *Pothī Harijasa* (ca. 1860 VS/1803–04) contains compositions in a number of poetic genres,<sup>31</sup> including a text entitled *Parachīṭā bhagatā kīṭā* that contains accounts of 30 *bhagats* ranging from legendary figures such as Amṛīka and Nārada to historical figures such as Nāmdev and Guru Nanak. The twenty-ninth *parachī* in the text is an account of Sūrdās in 117 verses that expands on the *gosaṭi* noted above and shares a number of features with the *Bhaktamālas* of Nābhādās and Rāghavdās as well as with the Vallabhite tradition. The text's account of Sūrdās is as follows:

When Kṛṣṇa came to Braj in Dvāparayuga, he cursed a cowherd named Guālī with rebirth in Kaliyuga for having looked at a *gopī* with lustful eyes. Kṛṣṇa promised him that he would be reunited with Him by singing the *līlā*, and Guālī asked for his eyes to be removed in his future birth in order to prevent him from going astray.

Guālī was reborn as Sūrdās, the blind son of a Kayasth named Bhagvān Dās from Govardhan who served in the imperial court as *dīvān*. When he was ten or twelve years old, he began to feel love for Hari. The emperor offered Sūrdās employment, but Bhagvān Dās refused on the grounds of his son's blindness. When the emperor saw Sūr, though, he gave him a *maṇṣab* rank of one hundred horse and rewarded both father and son with *siropās* (robes of honour) and gold. Sūrdās faithfully administered his *jāgīr* until he was reminded of the transitory nature of worldly goods by a passing herdsman. He gave away all his possessions except a sheet and began to sing the *sagūṇa līlā*.

Sūrdās became famous as a *bhagat* and poet. He sang about Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, and his poetry contained the essence of the Vedas, *śāstras*,

<sup>30</sup> Bhasha Vibhag, Patiala ms. 359, ff. 363a–67b. The first Dhanāsarī composition appears as *pada* 120 of the 'Ratnākar' edition (1:39) and in the Fatehpur manuscript from Rajasthan dated 1582, available in a facsimile edition as Gopal Narayan Bahura and Ken Bryant (ed.), *Pada Sūradāsajī kā/The padas of Surdas*. (Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Memorial Series, no. 6.) (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, 1984), 101. It also appears in a nineteenth-century Mīnā compilation of compositions of the Sikh Gurus, the Mīnā gurus and the *bhagats* (Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar ms. 1003, f. 138b). The second Dhanāsarī composition appears as *pada* 11 of the 'Ratnākar' edition (1:36). The text of the Sāranga, Naṭa and second Dhanāsarī *padas* is given separately below.

<sup>31</sup> For an edition of another of the sections of the *Pothī*, see Jathedār Kirpāl Singh (ed.), *Mājha Bhāi Darbārī* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1988).



*purāṇas* and Qurān. His fame reached the emperor, who heard one of his poems and sent his *vazīr* to summon Sūr to court. The emperor offered Sūr vast rewards to sing his praises, but Sūr refused and was sent away.

Sūr chided Hari and asked for his eyes back; when he received them, he saw his previous birth and asked Hari to remove his eyes again. When Hari told him that He was both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*, Sūrdās decided to sing occasionally about the *nirguṇa* as well. He married at Hari's command but did not have sexual relations with his wife for 14 years, at which point she prayed to Jagannāth for help. Jagannāth sent a man who had been cursed with leprosy for eating pork while on pilgrimage to be cured by seeing Sūr and told him to give Sūr the message that he should have relations with his wife. A son named Sahaj Gopāl was born, after which Sūr was called to Hari and given a place near Rukmiṇī, Rādhikā and all the *gopīs*.<sup>32</sup>

Another community which was concerned with scriptural exegesis at an early date was the Udāsīs, a group of ascetic orders which trace their spiritual descent to Srīchand, son of Guru Nanak, and Gurdittā, son of the sixth Guru Hargobind. Influential enough to be considered a 'parallel succession' by at least some in the eighteenth-century Panth,<sup>33</sup> the Udāsīs utilized the liberal patronage given them by the Sikh rulers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to engage in literary work, ascetic tours and gurdwara construction throughout India and into central Asia.<sup>34</sup> Sevā Dās Udāsī's *Parachīṭā* (1741) grapples with the textual problem of Sūrdās's contribution to the *Adi Granth*, and Udāsī texts on the *bhagats* such as Bidhī Dās Udāsī's *Bhagatī sudhāsara* (begun in 1874 and completed in 1886) included stories about Sūrdās.<sup>35</sup> Nineteenth-century sources seem to indicate that Udāsī *sādhūs* read *Adi Granth* texts that contained the Sūrdās *pada*, and nineteenth-century Udāsī authors included his name in compositions that imitated Guru Arjan's *Adi Granth astapadī* in Basantu *rāga* on mythical and historical *bhagats*.<sup>36</sup> Thus, despite the silence of mainstream Sikh sources on Sūrdās, early 'heterodox' exegetical traditions provide a window into pre-modern conceptions of his identity and his place in the constellation of *bhagats*.

During the nineteenth century a number of Hindu and Sikh authors in Punjab wrote texts on the lives of the *bhagats*, mostly commentaries on earlier Hindi texts. A text entitled *Bhagatī premākari*, containing the lives of 24 *bhagats* written by Jassā Singh of Phagwara in 1883 VS/1826–27, is no longer

<sup>32</sup> Darbārī Dās, *Bhāi Darbārī Dās rachit Parachīṭā bhagatā kīā (Pothī Harijasa)*, ed. Gurcharan Singh 'Sek' (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1991), 498–517.

<sup>33</sup> Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bhāi Kesar Singh Chhibbar krit Bansāvalīnāmā dasā Pātashāhīā kā*, ed. Piārā Singh Padam (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997), 56 (*charana* 2:77).

<sup>34</sup> For the Udāsīs, see the works of Sulakhan Singh: 'Udasis under the Sikh rule (1750–1850)', (Ph.D. dissertation, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1985); 'Udasi establishments under Sikh rule', *Journal of Regional History*, 1, 1980: 70–87; 'The Udasis in the early nineteenth century', *JRH*, 2, 1981: 35–42; 'Udasi beliefs and practices', *JRH*, 4, 1983: 78–93.

<sup>35</sup> Hari Singh (ed.), *Parachīṭā* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1978) and Piara Singh Padam (ed.), *Parachī Pātashāhī Dasavī kī* (Patiala: the author, 1988). Neither edition can be called critical. For Bidhī Dās's text, see Jasbir Singh Sābar, *Bhagat Ravidās srot pustak* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1984), 164–5. The only manuscript of the work was in the Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar before the Library's destruction in the Indian Army's attack on the Golden Temple complex in June 1984.

<sup>36</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Religious sects of the Hindus*, Reprint (Calcutta: Sushil Gupta, 1958), 149–50, also quoted in Sulakhan Singh, 'Udasi beliefs and practices', 79. It may well be, however, that Wilson has transposed onto his account of the Udāsīs a listing of the contents of the Banno recension of the *Granth* that included the Sūrdās *pada*. For Udāsī *bhagat*-compositions, see for example Rām Dās, *Bānī Bābā Rāma Dāsa*, ed. Jasbir Singh Sābar (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1989), 50. The Guru Arjan composition they imitated is Basantu M5 *gharu 1 dutukīā 1* (AG, 1192).



extant.<sup>37</sup> A mid-nineteenth century commentary on Nābhādās by Kīrat Singh also entitled *Bhagati premākari*, which apparently has many lines in common with Jassā Singh's text, is extant in both manuscript and printed form.<sup>38</sup> The substance of the commentary on the Madanmohan Sūrdās *chhappaya* is essentially the same as that of Priyādās, while the text does not comment on the seventy-third *chhappaya* on the poetic merits of Sūrdās.<sup>39</sup> The commentary given in Kirpā Rām's *Bhagatamālā kā īkā* (ca. 1872 VS/1815–16), also follows Priyādās closely.<sup>40</sup> Another roughly contemporary text, Dhiān Singh's *Bhagata rasamanjarī* (1926 VS/1869), comments on both of Nābhādās's *chhappayas*. The commentary on the seventy-third *chhappaya* reproduces one of Sūrdās's *padas* and narrates the story of how Akbar decided to test the power of Sūrdās's poetry by weighing a verse against coins worth two hundred thousand rupees and by burning it. When the verse proved heavier than the coins and able to resist the fire, it was placed in the royal treasury.<sup>41</sup> The commentary on the Madanmohan Sūrdās *chhappaya* closely follows Priyādās, amplifying the role of Tōdar Mal in his arrest, naming his jailer as 'Rustam Khān' and definitively identifying Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya as his guru.<sup>42</sup> A late text, Giān Singh's *Guramati anusāra bhagatamālā* (1956 VS/1899) appears to misread the juxtaposition of the stories of Sūrdās and the south Indian *bhakta* Bilvamangal in Rāghavdās's *Bhaktamālā* by taking Bilvamangal's story to be that of Sūrdās's previous birth:

Sūrdās was loved by Ṭhākūrjī because he sang His qualities day and night. In his last life, as Bilvamangal, he was orphaned at the age of ten and fell in love with a courtesan named Chintāmaṇī at the age of 20. He spent so much of his inherited wealth on her that he neglected to hold a *shrāddh* feast for his father until he was reprimanded by his brother. He left the feast to see Chintāmaṇī, crossing the river that separated them while it was in full flood. He crossed the river on a floating corpse which he mistook for a boat sent by Chintāmaṇī, and scaled the walls of her house using a snake which he thought was a rope left by her to assist him. Chintāmaṇī chided him for these delusions and told him to love Ṭhākūrjī with the same devotion that he felt for her.

Bilvamangal accepted Chintāmaṇī's advice, took her as his guru, and set off for Vrindavan. Along the way, he saw a beautiful woman filling her water-jug at a riverbank and followed her home. He sat outside her hut calling for water, at which her husband ordered her to serve the visiting *sādhū*. When she told him that she believed the mendicant wanted physical relations with her, her husband told her to adorn herself and serve him in

<sup>37</sup> For information on Jassā Singh, see Sābar, *Bhagat Ravidās*, 139; the only known manuscript was at the Sikh Reference Library.

<sup>38</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar ms. 702; Kīrat Singh, *Bhagat mālā satīk* (n.p.: Vazir Hind Press, n.d.), 512–4. Other manuscripts of the work include: Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar ms. 941; Central State Library, Patiala mss. 1928 and 2573; Punjabi University, Patiala ms. 115402; and the no longer extant Sikh Reference Library 31/780 (see *Sūchī purāṭan khararīā (hath likhat Panjābī pustakā dī) Sikkh Raifraims Lāibrerī* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1957), 3).

<sup>39</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 702, ff. 390b–92a, 320b.

<sup>40</sup> Khalsa College, Amritsar ms. 1595, ff. 104b–5a. The chronogram at the end of the text reads, 'sammata purāṇa ara dakhasutānī ke pahichāno/adhaka manobhava sara puna beda ananda jī chīno'. Its value is complicated by the fact that 'the daughters of Dakṣa' (*dakhasutānī*) can be taken as either 50 or 60 and Manobhava/Kāma as either six or 13. I have taken their values to be 50 and 13 respectively. I am not aware of a numerical value for *ananda*.

<sup>41</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 611, f. 122a. The poem is *pada* 4527 of the Ratnākār edition of the *Sūrasāgara* (2:1482). Presumably influenced by the administrative terminology of Ranjīt Singh's Lahore state, the commentary states that Sūrdās was the *kārdār* of Sandilā.

<sup>42</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 611, ff. 181ab.



any way he wished. When she came and sat on the bed where Bilvamangal awaited her, he repented his falsehood and resolved that a householder was better than a false *sādhū*. He decided to turn away from vice and from the company of those who shunned Ṭhākūrjī, composing the *pada* '*chhāḍī mana hari bimukhana ko sanga*' in Sāranga *rāga*.<sup>43</sup> He asked the woman for a needle, which he heated and used to put out his eyes. He then asked her husband to lead him to Vrindaban.

When he arrived there, Bilvamangal could not find Ṭhākūrjī's temple, and in his distress composed three poems.<sup>44</sup> Hearing them, Ṭhākūrjī took on the form of a child and led Bilvamangal to the temple. When the child said that he had to return home to his mother, Bilvamangal replied that he did not wish to go inside the temple when he had already seen his Lord. He refused to let Ṭhākūrjī leave and would not let go of His arm even when He took on a much larger form. Ṭhākūrjī was pleased and gave him a vision of his four-armed (*chaturbhujā*) form. Bilvamangal was pleased and composed the *shabad* '*hari ke sanga base hari loka*'. Ṭhākūrjī asked Bilvamangal to request a boon; he asked that he remain blind and that he be given the gifts of devotion and of seeing only the Lord. He was granted all his wishes and told that whoever read his poetry would find salvation.<sup>45</sup>

Like most other nineteenth-century texts, then, Giān Singh's commentary represents a reworking of major texts of the Hindi tradition, although in this case the narrative material of the Hindi texts has been adapted to fit the contents of the *Adi Granth*.

### *The Adi Granth*

The *Adi Granth*, known to the faithful as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, contains the compositions of the first five and ninth Sikh Gurus (Nanak, Angad, Amardas, Ramdas, Arjan, and Tegh Bahadur), of four figures associated with the early Sikh Panth (Sattā, Balvaṇḍ, Sundar and Mardānā), of a group of Brahman *bhatts* (panegyrist associated with Guru Arjan), of 13 north Indian poets generally referred to in Hindi scholarship as *sant* poets (Kabīr, Nāmdev, Ravidās, Jaidev, Trilochan, Sadhnā, Benī, Saiṇ, Pīpā, Rāmānand, Dhannā, Parmānand and Sūrdās) and of two Sufis (Bhīkhan and Farīd). Within the Sikh tradition, the last two groups are generally known as the *bhagats*. In the *Adi Granth* itself, the term *bhagat* has both a general connotation of 'devotee' or 'worshipper' and specific reference to named mythical and historical figures like Valmīki, Dhruva, Kabīr and Ravidās. As such, the term is used in the *Granth* to describe the compositions of the last two groups of poets taken as a whole: '*bāṇī bhagatā dī*'.

<sup>43</sup> The text of the *pada* as given in the manuscript reads

*chhāḍa mana hari bimukhana ko sanga*  
*jā kai milai kubudha upajata hai parata bhajana mai bhanga. 1. rahāu.*  
*kāhā bhae pīpāi paīāe bikha na tajai bhujanga.*  
*kāgā kāhā kapūra chugāvata suāna navāe gangā.*  
*khara kau kāhā agara jā lepāna markatā bhūkhana angā. 1.*  
*patata pakhāna bāna nāhī bedhe rīte bhae nikhanga.*  
*sūradāsa kārī kamarīā charata na dūsara rangā. 2.*

<sup>44</sup> The first of the three poems is 'Ratnākar' *pada* 137 (1:45). The other two *padas* are not in the printed *Sūrasāgara*, but I have not reproduced them in the paper owing to the relatively late date of the manuscript.

<sup>45</sup> Panjab University, Chandigarh ms. 1179, ff. 80a–83b. The text is in two volumes, the first of which is Panjab University, Chandigarh ms. 1178. The colophon of the second volume has had the name of the author altered from Giān Singh to Dhiān Singh (ms. 1179, f.192b).

In modern Punjabi, the term *bhagat* can be used either in its wider meaning of 'devotee' or, more infrequently, as a specific title for an individual practising a type of piety usually more quietist than that of the Khālsā. In general the title *bhagat* is reserved for those of extraordinary merit such as the humanitarian Bhagat Pūran Singh. Descendants of a *bhagat* occasionally appropriate the term as a family name or title, as in the case of the famed Singh Sabha figure Bhagat Laksman Singh, a descendant of an eighteenth-century Sikh named Bhagat Dayāl Chand who was renowned for his piety.<sup>46</sup> In the modern Panth, though, the term *bhagat* is almost exclusively used to describe the group of Adi Granth poets discussed above. When the *bhagat bānī* is excerpted from the Granth for devotional purposes, the resulting volume will usually contain the compositions of all those in the Adi Granth except the Gurus (the second through fifth groups described above), but commentaries (*tīkās*) on the text of the *bhagat bānī* usually include only the fourth and fifth groups.

Like the tradition's specialized use of the term *bhagat*, many of the other terms used to explicate the Adi Granth differ from those used to describe north Indian devotional literature of the period and may therefore require some explanation. The Adi Granth corpus in general or the body of works attributed to a particular poet is known as *bānī*. An individual poem is called a *shabad* rather than a *pada* as in Hindi,<sup>47</sup> and the *doharā* or *sākhī* of Hindi traditions is called a *saloka*. The *ṭeka* or *dhruva* verse of an individual *shabad* is known as the *rahāu* and generally follows the first complete verse of a *shabad*. It is important to note that all the Gurus who composed verses used the *chhāpa* Nanak; they are differentiated within the text by the heading *Mahalā* (abbreviated as M) followed by the number indicating their position in the chronology of Gurus (ie, Nanak is M1, Angad M2, etc.).

The Adi Granth is divided into three main sections: an introductory liturgical section, the bulk of the text in 31 *rāga*-divisions (which subsume a number of composite *rāgas*), and a final section of collections of shorter verses. The liturgical section is divided into three parts according to the time at which a particular liturgy is to be employed, and the final section of the Granth is divided according to the following scheme: *sahaskritī salokas* of the first five Gurus, *sahaskritī* compositions of Guru Arjan (*gāthā*, *phunahe*, *chaūbole*),<sup>48</sup> *salokas* by Kabīr, *salokas* by Farīd, *savayyās* by Guru Arjan, *savayyās* about the Gurus by the *bhatts*, *salokas* by the first five Gurus not included in the *vāras* elsewhere in the Granth, *salokas* by the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur, two concluding *shabads* by Guru Arjan and a concluding list of *rāgas* entitled the *Rāgamālā*. The *rāga*-section of the Granth, which comprises the bulk of the text, divides each *rāga* internally in two ways: by length of composition and by author. Within each *rāga*, compositions are first split into two separate groups, those by the Gurus and those by the *bhagats*. Within each of these sections, compositions are grouped in an arrangement roughly characterized by increasing length: short verses (usually *chaūpadā*, but also *dupadā*, *tripadā* and *panchpadā*),<sup>49</sup> *aṣṭapadī* (consisting of eight verses plus *rahāu*), *chhanta* (of varying length, but often shorter than the *aṣṭapadī*), and longer independent compositions. Each of these generic subdivisions is further divided chronologically according to which of the Gurus composed the poems, with each of the Gurus identified by the word *Mahalā* and his number in the sequence of ten

<sup>46</sup> Bhagat Laksman Singh, *Bhagat Lakshman Singh autobiography* ed. Ganda Singh (Calcutta: Sikh Cultural Centre, 1965), 1–7.

<sup>47</sup> The term *shabad* (here *sabadu*) appears in this sense as a heading to Mārū M1 1 (AG, 989).

<sup>48</sup> For *sahaskritī* see C. Shackleton, 'The Sahaskritī poetic idiom in the *Ādi Granth*', *BSOAS* xli 2, 1978, 297–313.

<sup>49</sup> Consisting of four, two, three and five verses plus *rahāu* respectively.



Gurus. The section of *bhagat bānī* (present in only 20 of the 31 *rāgas*) is also divided according to author, with the same general progression from shorter to longer compositions within each author grouping. Generally, compositions by Kabīr, Nāmdev and Ravidās (in that order) precede those of the other *bhagats*. Some of the *rāga*-compositions by the Gurus and the *bhagats* are grouped into *gharas* ('houses'), of which there are 17. The *gharas* are sometimes explained as *rāga*-variations or indications of *tāla*, although a completely satisfactory explanation of their meaning has yet to be given.

Like other north Indian verse anthologies of its period, the *Adi Granth* is characterized by an efficient system of numbering. Each *shabad* in the text is followed by two or three numbers. The first of these identifies the number of the *shabad* within a particular section (i.e., M5 *aṣṭapadīs*) or *ghara*. The second identifies the total number of *shabads* by the author in the *rāga*, and the third (if present) often identifies the total number of *shabads* in a *rāga*. The system is generally consistent, although all of the types of numbers may not be present for every *shabad*. Manuscripts of the Banno tradition (see below) often include author-totals after each genre section of a *rāga* and totals of the number of *shabads* in each genre at the end of the Guru section of each *rāga*.

Tradition and scholarship recognize four textual recensions of the *Adi Granth*: the Kartārpur version said to have been compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604, the Banno recension, the Lahore recension (first noted at the beginning of the twentieth century) and the Damdamī version attributed to Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>50</sup> Traditional accounts of the compilation of the *Granth* state that when Guru Arjan had finished the text, a Sikh named Banno requested permission to take the manuscript to his own village (some accounts state that Guru Arjan gave Banno the text so he could take it to Lahore to be bound). On the way, Banno had a copy made, adding to the body of the text a composition each by Mīrābāī, Kabīr and Sūrdās and to the end of the volume a number of compositions attributed to Guru Nanak. The Lahore recension—so named because its earliest exemplar was found in a Lahore gurdwara at the beginning of this century—lacks the extra material of the Banno text, has an extra composition each of Nāmdev and Trilochan, and has a different order from the Kartārpur recension at the end of the text. The Damdamī recension is traditionally said to be a faithful copy of the Kartārpur text recited from memory by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 to which he added the compositions of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur. The recension is said to have been given the Guruship by Gobind Singh upon his death in 1708 and forms the basis of the modern printed version of the *Adi Granth*, whereas most extant *Adi Granth* manuscripts appear to be of the Banno recension.

### *Sūrdās in the Adi Granth*

Before considering the representation of Sūrdās in the text of the *Adi Granth*, we should briefly enumerate the other works attributed to poets named Sūrdās in Punjabi manuscript traditions. There are a number of manuscripts of the *Sūrasāgara* in Punjabi collections, some of which comprise only the ninth and tenth *skandhas* of the text as traditionally arranged (often titled *Sūra Rāmāyaṇa* and *Srīmadbhāgavata purāṇa bhākhā* respectively).<sup>51</sup> The oldest extant

<sup>50</sup> For further information on the recensions of the *Adi Granth*, see Jeevan Deol 'Text and lineage in early Sikh tradition' *Modern Asian Studies* (forthcoming).

<sup>51</sup> See for example Central State Library, Patiala mss. 535, 536, 544, 587, 1870, 1927, 2176, 2736 and 2880; Guru Nanak Dev University mss. 116, 121, 774 and 989; Khalsa College, Amritsar mss. 1573 and 1592; Punjab University, Chandigarh ms. 89; Punjabi University, Patiala mss. 115398 and 115393; Moti Bagh Library, Patiala mss. 21 and 233 (for the last two, see Shamsher Singh Ashok, *Panjābī haṭh likhṭā dī sūchī*. 2 vols. (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1961–63), 1:86); Sikh



manuscript in Punjabi collections of portions of the *Sūrasāgara* is dated 1765 VS/1708, while another copy of the text reportedly written by scribes at the court of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh in 1753 VS/1696–97 is no longer extant.<sup>52</sup> In addition, anthologies available in Punjabi collections include *padas* not in the *Sūrasāgara*, and short verse texts including a *mājhā* and texts entitled *Bārāmāhā Srī Rāma jī kā*, *Dhruvalilā*, *Rāma Krisana autāra ustati* and *Bamsarī Kīsana kī* bearing the *chhāpa* Sūrdās are also extant.<sup>53</sup> There is also a Sufistic version of the Nala-Damayantī story composed in 1657 by a Sūrdās whose father had moved from Gurdāspur to Lucknow.<sup>54</sup> The Sūrdās *pada* found in some Adī Granth manuscripts is reportedly also found in the *Saina sāgara grantha*, an eighteenth-century compilation of the works of Saiṇ written in imitation of the Adī Granth, and a *shabad* of the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, found in *rāga* Sorathī in the Adī Granth, is given with minor variation under the *chhāpa* Sūrdās in Dhanāsarī *rāga* in the *vinaya* section of the printed *Sūrasāgara*.<sup>55</sup>

A single *pada* with the *chhāpa* Sūrdās was present in the Harsahāi *pothī*, an early compilation of the *bānī* that its custodians claimed was compiled by Guru Nanak.<sup>56</sup> Gurditt Singh has published a photograph of the *pada*, which seems to be lacking most of the *rahāu* verse (which has therefore not been translated):

... ura kachhu deta<sup>57</sup> bāvaro loga. rahau  
jā ko kahata sabhai sukhī tā ke bikhai abhoga.  
jiu gaja dhūri udāvata sira pari tā ko kahata aroga. 1.  
dukhadāi sabhu kuṭambu hai āi<sup>58</sup> hota sanjoga.  
sūradāsa madanamohana bhaji lai ihai tihārā joga.<sup>59</sup>

Reference Library mss. 126/2432 and 264/5027 (see *Sūchī purātan khararīā*, 10, 17); and Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehra Dun ms. 305.

<sup>52</sup> Central State Library, Patiala ms. 2880. For the manuscript by Guru Gobind Singh's court scribes, see *Sūchī purātan khararīā*, 17 and Piara Singh Padam, *Gurū Gobind Singh jī de darbarī ratan* (Patiala: the author, 1976), 144, 253. It is unclear from either description whether the manuscript included the whole text or merely portions of it. Ashok claims that the two Moti Bagh Library manuscripts he cites are sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *vikramī* respectively (see footnote 50 above), but his catalogue often gives the dates of composition of texts in place of copy dates.

<sup>53</sup> Anthologies with verses attributed to poets with the *chhāpa* Sūrdās include Punjabi University, Patiala mss. 115661 and 115671, Panjab University, Chandigarh mss. 393 and 1201 and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar mss. 22 and 133. The first four manuscripts include some *padas* found in the *Sūrasāgara* and others with the same first lines as *Sūrasāgara padas* whose text is different from the *Sūrasāgara* versions. For a text of the *mājhā*, see Piara Singh Padam, *Panjābī mājhā (bavanjā kaviā dī aprakāshit kavita)* (Patiala: Sardār Sāhitt Bhavan, 1960), 52, 16. Ashok mentions a manuscript of the *Rām Krisana autāra ustati* in his own collection and a manuscript containing *Dhruvalilā* at the Central State Library, Patiala, both of which I was unable to locate (*Panjābī hatth likhāt dī sūchī*, 2:114, 1:542–43). The *Bārāmāhā Srī Rāma jī kā* is available in Punjabi University, Patiala ms. 115638 and National Museum, New Delhi N.M. 62.201, and the *Bamsarī Kīsana kī* in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 27.

<sup>54</sup> Ronald Stuart McGregor, *Hindi literature from its beginnings to the nineteenth century* vol. viii, fasc. 6 of Jan Gonda (ed.), *A history of Indian literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 152.

<sup>55</sup> On the *Saina sāgara grantha* see Gurditt Singh, *Itihās*, 592. For the *shabad* of Guru Tegh Bahadur, see Adī Granth, p. 634 and 'Ratnākar' et al., *Sūrasāgara, pada* 79, 1:26. I am thankful to Dr Darshan Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala for pointing out the *Sūrasāgara* reference.

<sup>56</sup> A photograph of the *pada* in the *pothī* manuscript is reproduced in Gurditt Singh, *Itihās*, 10 and transliterated on page 584. The manuscript was supposedly stolen from a railway carriage in 1973 and is therefore no longer accessible for scholarly examination. The portion containing the works of the *bhagats* was apparently in a different hand and therefore presumably more recent than the portion containing the works of the Gurus (Gurditt Singh, *Itihās*, 558, 561, 578).

<sup>57</sup> Gurditt Singh transcribes this word as 'cheta' (*Itihās*, 584). The manuscript is unclear at this point.

<sup>58</sup> This word has been run together with those preceding and following it in the text and is difficult to read. Gurditt Singh (*Itihās*, 584) reads the line as 'dukhadāi kuṭumba ko hai ākhata bhūla sanjoga', which is clearly incorrect.

<sup>59</sup> The final numbering of the *pada* is obscured and it is followed by a blank space.



He whom everybody thinks is happy finds sensual enjoyment unpalatable;<sup>60</sup>  
 Just as an elephant throws dust on its head and is declared sound. (1)  
 The whole family gives pain; one has a connection with them [only] after  
 coming into this world.<sup>61</sup>

Sūrdās, praise Madanamohana: this is the means you should use.<sup>62</sup>

This *pada* does not seem to appear elsewhere in Sikh literature or in early Hindi manuscripts of Sūrdās literature.<sup>63</sup> There are also two *padas* attributed to Sūrdās that do not appear in the published *Sūrasāgara* in the seventeenth-century *Mīṇā Kathā Sūra gusāi kī*:

*sāranga*  
*jiu tuma jānahu tiu mohi udhārahu.*  
*patitana mahi bikha ādi pragaṭi hai hari hari nāmu tihāro. rahāu.*  
*baḍe baḍe nāhī mohi samasari ajaimahu kavanu bīchāro.*  
*bhāgo naraka nāmu suni mero jāmahi kīo. ... 1.*  
*chhidhra patita tāre tai sagale rāma kāhi kīṭi gāro.*  
*mānau sūra kuṭala kapaṭi kaū pāvana tali lai tārāhu. 2.<sup>64</sup>*

Save me however you see fit to:  
 Sinners are filled with poisons and [the only hope] is repeating your name,  
 Hari. *rahāu*  
 The greatest [sinners] are not my equals: who is poor Ajāmala [in  
 comparison]?

65

Whatever sinners you have saved were petty ones, Rāma, so why feel proud?  
 Take the guileful, deceptive Sūr across on the pure boat. (2)

*naṭa*  
*kaḥīata ho tuma aise tiāgī dāni.*  
*chārī padāratha dīe sudāme aru gura ke suta āni. rahāu.*  
*dahasira ke dasa masataka kāṭe karu dhari sārāga bāni.*  
*lanka bhabhikhana kamu tai dīnī pūrabi prīti pachhāni. 1.*  
*dhurū prahilādu amaru kari rākhiu surapati kīno jāni.*  
*sūra kī barīā niṭhura bhae hai duha nainahu kī hāni. 2.<sup>66</sup>*

It is said that you are generous and self-denying.<sup>67</sup>  
 You gave everything to Sudāmā and brought the boy to the guru.<sup>68</sup> *rahāu*  
 You took bow and arrow in your hand and cut off the ten heads of Rāvaṇa:

<sup>60</sup> The syntax of the second half of the line is somewhat problematic.

<sup>61</sup> The syntax of the second half of the line is somewhat problematic.

<sup>62</sup> Alternatively, 'this is your yoga'. I have not translated the incomplete *rahāu* verse.

<sup>63</sup> I owe my information on the Hindi Sūrdās manuscripts to Prof. Kenneth E. Bryant of the University of British Columbia.

<sup>64</sup> f. 363b. The text has been obscured at a number of places due to paper having been glued on top of the folio.

<sup>65</sup> I have not translated this line, as the second half is not legible.

<sup>66</sup> ff. 364ab. The *pada* also appears in a nineteenth-century anthology of the works of a number of poets, Panjab University Chandigarh ms. 393, ff. 119ab:

*kaḥāvata aise tiāgī dāna*  
*chārā padāratha dīe sudāmahi aru gura ke suta āna. rahāu.*  
*rāvana ke dasa masataka chhede kara gahi sārāgaprāna.*  
*vibhikhana kau tumu lankā dīnī pūrābali pahichāna.*  
*vipra sudāmā kīyo ajāchī prīta purātana jāna.*  
*sūradāsa sau kaḥā niṭhura bhae nainana hū kī hāni.*

<sup>67</sup> The commentary to the *pada* seems to use the word 'triāgu' to mean 'gift' or 'favour'.

<sup>68</sup> The commentary to this verse reads 'and you brought the drowning child from the sea and gave him to the guru' (f. 364a).

You gave Lankā to Vibhīṣaṇa in recognition of his previous love [for you]. (1)

You made Dhruva and Prahalāda immortal and created Indra<sup>69</sup>—

But you were cruel when Sūr's turn came and harmed his two eyes. (2)

A third *pada* given in the *Kathā Sūra gusāī kī* appears in a slightly different form from its *Sūrasāgara* version:<sup>70</sup>

*dhanāsarī*

*mere jī tū gani avagani na bīchāri.*

*rākhahu lāji sarani āe kī ravisuta trāsa nivāri. rahāu*

*je giripati masu ghorī udadhi mahi le surataranī hāthi.*

*mama krita dokha likho basudhā bhari taū nāhī miti nātha. 1.*

*kāmī kuṭīlu kuchīlu kudarasanu aparādhī mati hīnu.*

*nā mohi sunīata avaru koū prabha jāhi bhajaū mohī dīna. 2.*

*jīta jīta joni sankatā bhrami āiā tita tita ehī kamāiā.*

*kāma krodhu abhimānu manai mahi bikhahu parama bikhu pāiā. 3.*

*homa jaga japu tapu nahī kīnā mai bedu bibala nahī bhākhio.*

*ati rasa lubhata suāna jūthana jiu katahū nahī manu rākhio. 4.*

*jiu kapi sītahu bhāsana kunjaka rahata sevata liva līna.*

*ajahu prakirati na jāī usa kaṁu rahata brikha adhīna. 5.*

*alakha alekha daiāla damodara aghanāsana sukhārāsī.*

*bhajana pratāpu nāhi mohi jāniā badho kāla ke phāsa. 6.*

*mana kritagīrāsa sabhai bidhi samaratha asurana sarani murāri.*

*kripā nidhāna sūru dūbatu hai lījai bhujā pasāri. 7.<sup>71</sup>*

Sir, don't think of [my] good and bad qualities.<sup>72</sup>

Protect the reputation of the one who has come for shelter and drive away the fear of Yama. *rahāu*

If Gaṇesha makes ink out of the ocean, uses the wish-fulfilling tree as a pen  
And covers the entire earth with the sins I have committed, there will still  
be no end, Lord. (1)

I am a lustful and guileful, coarse and ugly, a dull-witted sinner:

I have not heard of any other Lord whom I, low and deluded, can  
worship. (2)

In whatever difficult births I have taken, I have earned this:

<sup>69</sup> The commentary takes the line to mean 'You made Dhruva and Prahalāda immortal and placed them above the gods'.

<sup>70</sup> For the *Sūrasāgara* version, see 'Ratnākār' *et al.*, *Sūrasāgara*, *pada* 111, 1:36.

<sup>71</sup> ff. 365a–6a. The *pada* is also found in a nineteenth-century anthology of the works of various poets (Panjab University, Chandigarh ms. 393, ff. 114a–15b):

*prabha mere guna avaguna na bichāro.*

*kījai lāja sarana āe kī ravisuta trāsa nivāro. rahāu.*

*joga jagya japata puna hī kīno veda bimala nahi bhākhio.*

*ati rasa lubhata svāna jūthana jyo kahū nahī chita rākhio.*

*jimha jimha joni paryo sankatī basa timha timha yahi kamāyo.*

*kāma krōdha mada locha grāsata mai vikhai parama vikha khāyo.*

*jo girapati masi ghorī udadhi mai lai suratara nija hātha.*

*mama krita dokha likhau basudhā bhari taū nahī mita nātha.*

*kāmī kuṭāla kuchīla kudarasana aparādhī mata hīna.*

*tohi samāna aura nahī dūjo jāhi bhajyo hvai dīna.*

*akhala ananta dayāla kripānidhi abanāsī sukhārāsa.*

*bhajana pratāpa nāhi mai jānyo bandhyo moha kī phāsa.*

*tuma sarbaggya saba hī bidha samratha asarana sarana murāra.*

*mohi samundra sūra būdata hai dījai bhujā pasāra.*

<sup>72</sup> Here *gani* has a punning association with both the root *gin-* ('to count') and the phrase *guna avaguna* 'good and bad qualities'), yielding the alternate reading 'Sir, don't dwell on my bad qualities'.



My mind is filled with lust, wrath and pride, and I have consumed poison after poison. (3)  
 I have not carried out the fire-sacrifice, remembered you or suffered austerities, nor have I recited the pure Vedas.<sup>73</sup>  
 I am greedy for pleasure and have not controlled my mind, which is like a dog chasing leftovers. (4)  
 [I am] just like a monkey that remains in thrall to the *kunjakā* tree during winter on account of its 'flames'.<sup>74</sup>  
 Its habit doesn't go away and it remains a slave to the tree. (5)  
 The ineffable, indescribable, compassionate Damodara, destroyer of sins and storehouse of happiness:  
 I did not know the power of singing [about you] and am caught in the snare of death. (6)  
 You are capable of all things, shelter of the demons, Murārī.<sup>75</sup>  
 Sūr is drowning, O storehouse of compassion, stretch out your arm to him. (7)

We have already noted that the printed version of the Adi Granth contains one line attributed to Sūrdās followed by a complete *shabad* that tradition attributes to Guru Arjan. The printed Adi Granth text of the Sūrdās hymn and its supplement are as follows:

*chhāḍi mana hari binukhana ko sanga.  
 sāranga mahalā 5 sūradāsa. ikk oaiṅkāra satigura prasadi*<sup>76</sup>  
*hari ke sanga base hari loka.  
 tanu manu arapi sarabasu sabhu arapio anada sahaja dhuni jhoka. 1. rahāu  
 darsana pekhi bhae nirabikhaī pāe hai sagale thoka.  
 āna basata siu kāju na kachhūai sundara badana aloka. 1.  
 siāmasundara taji āna jo chāhata jiu kusaḍi tana joka.  
 sūrdāsa manu prabhi hathi līno dīno ihu paraloka. 2.1.8. (AG, p. 1253)*

O mind, leave the company of those who turn away from Hari.  
*Sāranga Fifth Guru Sūrdās. One Oaiṅkāra by the grace of the True Guru.*  
 Hari's people live with Hari.  
 They've given body, mind, wealth all [to Hari and experience] waves of joy and unstruck sound. (1) *rahāu*  
 Through seeing him they've become free of poisons and found all things.  
 After seeing the beautiful face [of Hari], they have nothing to do with anything else: (1)  
 Those who abandon the beautiful Dark One and want something else are like leeches on a leper's body.  
 Sūrdās, it is as if the Lord has taken me in hand and given me the other world.<sup>77</sup> (2.1.8)

The final numbering of the second *shabad* indicates that the single line, which

<sup>73</sup> It is not clear what the 'bibala' of the poem's text is. The commentary reads 'I have not done remembrance (*japu*), austerities (*tapu*), [reading of the] Vedas and Shastras, or any good action (*krita*)' (f. 365b). I have assumed that the intended reading is 'bimala' (Sanskrit *vimala*), meaning 'pure'.

<sup>74</sup> The monkey believes that the tree's red flowers are flames. I have followed the commentary on the *pada* in translating this line.

<sup>75</sup> The meaning of the first quarter of the line is unclear. The second half of the line presumably means that even demons are saved if they seek shelter.

<sup>76</sup> This is the standard form of invocation found before *shabads* in the Adi Granth.

<sup>77</sup> The meaning of this line is somewhat unclear. Commentaries on the Adi Granth normally take the first half of this line to mean 'Surdas, the Lord has taken my mind in hand', see for example Sāhib Singh, *Śrī Gurū Granth Sāhib darpan*. Vol. 9 (Jalandhar: Rāj Publishers, 1964), 131.

is uncharacteristically unnumbered and without a heading indicating *rāga* or author, has been counted as the seventh *shabad* in the *bhagat bānī* section of Sāranga *rāga* and that its supplement is the eighth and the first by its author in this section (implying that the two *shabads* are by different authors).<sup>78</sup> These two *shabads* are preceded in the *bhagat bānī* section by two *shabads* by Kabīr, three by Nāmdev, and one by Paramānand; they are followed by a Kabīr *shabad* (*hari binu kaṁnu sahāi mana kā*), which would normally have been grouped with his two other compositions in the *rāga*.

The single line '*chhādi mana hari bimukhani ko sanga*' is found as a full *pada* in some Adi Granth manuscripts. According to Gurditt Singh, this *pada* was not present in the Harsahāi *pothī*, and it is not present in the two extant Goindvāl *pothīs* (traditionally believed to be the textual source of the Adi Granth).<sup>79</sup> Although the complexities of the representation of the text in the Adi Granth manuscript tradition (discussed below) make it difficult to establish a critical text of the *pada*, a text can be constructed on the basis of the readings of 18 seventeenth- and eighteenth-century manuscripts that contain the entire *pada*. The *pada* found in these Adi Granth manuscripts is also available in seventeenth-century Hindi Sūrdās manuscripts, in which those of the 'Rajasthani' textual family resemble the reading in the Granth while those of the 'Mathura' family display a significant number of textual variants, including a slightly different opening line (*tajau mana hari bimukhani ko sanga*).<sup>80</sup>

The text of the *pada* in the Adi Granth manuscript used here falls into at least six broad textual families. The restricted nature of the evidence does not permit any generalizations about the textual relationship between the manuscripts as a whole. Without such an understanding, it is not possible to construct a textual stemma for the readings of the *pada*. None the less, a

<sup>78</sup> It is also technically possible that the single line was considered part of a composition by Kabīr (whose compositions precede the line by Sūrdās) and was not given a heading for this reason. This is, however, a rather unlikely possibility.

<sup>79</sup> Gurditt Singh, *Itihās* 584–5; Mann, *The Goindval Pothis*.

<sup>80</sup> Prof. Kenneth E. Bryant of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada kindly provided me with a facsimile of the relevant folio of the earliest 'Mathura' family Sūrdās manuscript (dated 1638) that he found in the course of his research; the published text of the *pada* is available as 'Ratnākar' *pada* 332, 1:110. In the text of the Adi Granth *pada* presented here, I have excluded the readings found in the following seventeenth-century Banno manuscripts, in which the text of the entire *pada* has been added to the volume later: the Banno manuscript, Kanpur (1699 VS/1642); Punjab State Archives, Patiala ms. 341 (1723 VS/1666); Punjab University, Patiala ms. 115152 (1744 VS/1697); a Lahore recension manuscript at Takht Sri Harmandir Sahib, Patna dating from the period 1665–75 and another Lahore manuscript at Takht Sri Harmandir Sahib, Patna that appears to predate the third quarter of the seventeenth century. The text presented is based on the reading given on f. 574b of a manuscript at Takht Harimandir Sahib, Patna (hereafter abbreviated as Patna) dated Pūs *sudī* 13, 1755 VS/1699, designated as 'A' in the critical apparatus below. The other manuscripts used are: B: f. 499a of a manuscript with Prof. Madanjit Kaur of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar dated Jeth *sudī* 1, 1758 VS/1701; C: f. 618b of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 73 dated Māgh *sudī* 12, 1760 VS/1704; D: ff. 996b–97a of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. G-72 (originally from Benares) dated Asādh *vadī* 7, 1764 VS/1708; E: ff. 715b–16a of a manuscript at Patna dated Chet *vadī* 2, 1784 VS/1727; F: f. 885b of a manuscript at Patna dated Chet *vadī* 2, 1784 VS/1727 (date in another hand); G: f. 717b of a manuscript dated Chet *sudī* 3, 1787/1730 with Piara Singh Padam of Patiala; H: f. 949b of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. G-67 (originally from Benares) dated Agahan *sudī* 4, 1791 VS/1734; I: f. 719a of a manuscript at Patna dated Katak *vadī* 5, 1801/1744; J: f. 687a of a manuscript at Patna dated Chait *sudī* 5, 1805/1748; K: f. 556b of a manuscript at Patna dated Asār *vadī* 3, 1809 VS/1752; L: ff. 923b–24a of a manuscript dated Chait *vadī* 2, 1817 VS/1760 with Piara Singh Padam; M: f. 890a of a manuscript at Patna dated Chet *sudī* 1, 1817 VS/1760; N: f. 559a of a manuscript at Patna dated Māgh *vadī* 1, 1821 VS/1765; O: f. 503a of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi ms. 7 dated Māgh *vadī* 8, 1842 VS/1786; P: f. 742a of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. G-62 (originally from Benares) dated Māgh *badī* 12, 1842 VS/1786, copied from a text dated Kārtik *sudī* 1, 1788 VS/1731; Q: f. 589b of Punjabi University, Patiala ms. 115465 dated Phagan 3, 1847 VS/1791; R: f. 920a of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. G-65 (originally from Benares) dated Phāgun *sudī* 6, 1852 VS/1796, copied from a text dated Bhādu *sudī* 5, 1794 VS/1737.



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textual and statistical study of the readings of the *pada* in the manuscripts shows that they fall into six broad recensions: a Patna recension (A, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, Q), a recension represented by Patna manuscript I, a recension represented by the Madanjit Kaur manuscript (B), a recension represented by the Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan manuscript (O) and two Benares recensions represented by manuscripts P and R. The Patna manuscript contains within it a number of textual groups that demonstrate a strong affinity with one another: AE, EF, FMN, GL, CJ and JM.<sup>81</sup> Of the manuscripts included in the Patna recension (so named since most of the texts in it were found in Patna), C and Q are found in University collections in Amritsar and Patiala respectively, D and H were originally found in Benares, and G and L are found in the collection of Piara Singh Padam of Patiala. Although manuscript I displays a relatively high statistical affinity with the manuscripts of the Patna recension, it displays a number of important variant readings that indicate it may descend from another source. Similarly, the two Benares manuscripts P and R exhibit a relatively high percentage of identical readings but differ on a number of key readings that may indicate a separate textual or oral source. In general, where significant oral or textual variants are concerned, the Patna recension differs from two of O, P and R. A tabular representation of the position of the main textual variants in the six recensions should serve to illustrate the relationship between them:

	Patna	I	B	O	P	R
line 2	<i>pīpāi</i>	<i>pīpāi</i>	<i>pīapāi</i>	<i>pai pāna</i>	<i>pai pāna</i>	<i>pai pāna</i>
line 2	<i>tajai</i>	<i>tajai</i>	<i>tajai</i>	<i>tajata</i>	<i>tajai</i>	<i>tajata</i>
line 5	<i>pāhana</i>	<i>pāhana</i>	<i>pāhana</i>	<i>patita</i>	<i>patita</i>	<i>patita</i>
	<i>patita</i>	<i>patita</i>	<i>patita</i>	<i>pakhāna</i>	<i>pakhāna</i>	<i>pakhāna</i>
line 5	<i>hoi</i>	<i>bhae</i>	<i>hohi</i>	<i>bhae</i>	<i>bhae</i>	<i>bhae</i>
line 6	<i>kamarī</i>	<i>kamarīā</i>	<i>kamarī</i>	<i>kamarīā</i>	<i>kamarīā</i>	<i>kamarī</i>

The critical text of the *pada* presented below is based mainly on the readings of the Patna recension:

*chhādi mana hari*<sup>82</sup> *bimukhana ko*<sup>83</sup> *sanga*.<sup>84</sup>  
*kahā*<sup>85</sup> *bhae pīpāi*<sup>86</sup> *pīāe*<sup>87</sup> *bikhu*<sup>88</sup> *na*<sup>89</sup> *tajai*<sup>90</sup> *bhuianga*.<sup>91</sup> *1. rahāu*  
*kāgā*<sup>92</sup> *kahā*<sup>93</sup> *kapūra chugāe*<sup>94</sup> *suāna navāiai*<sup>95</sup> *ganga*.  
*khara kaū*<sup>96</sup> *kahā*<sup>97</sup> *agara ko*<sup>98</sup> *lepanu*<sup>99</sup> *marakaṭa bhūkhana anga.1.*

<sup>81</sup> All of these groups exhibit an affinity greater than 90 per cent.

<sup>82</sup> —: B

<sup>83</sup> *ako*; D; *kau*: H

<sup>84</sup> *sangu*: D, G, H, L, O, P

<sup>85</sup> *kahā*: B

<sup>86</sup> *pīpāi*: D, G, H, I, L, N; *pāi*: K; *pai pāna*: O, P, R; *pīapāi*: B

<sup>87</sup> *pīāe*: B, D, H, P, Q, R

<sup>88</sup> *bikha*: D, H, Q, R

<sup>89</sup> *nahī*: A, O

<sup>90</sup> *tajata*: C, O, R

<sup>91</sup> *bhuanga*: C, J, O

<sup>92</sup> *kāgā*: G

<sup>93</sup> *kaha*: E

<sup>94</sup> *chugāe*: G, I, K, L, N, Q; *chagāe*: H; *charāe*: P, R; *chugāē*: B

<sup>95</sup> *navāe*: B, O

<sup>96</sup> *ko*: P, R; *kou*: H

<sup>97</sup> *kaha*: L

<sup>98</sup> *aragajā* (replacing the phrase *agara ko*): D, P

<sup>99</sup> *lepana*: A, C, R



*pāhana*<sup>100</sup> *patita*<sup>101</sup> *bāna nahī*<sup>102</sup> *bedhe*<sup>103</sup> *rīte*<sup>104</sup> *hohi*<sup>105</sup> *nikhanga*.<sup>106</sup>  
*sūradāsa oi*<sup>107</sup> *kārī*<sup>108</sup> *kamarī*<sup>109</sup> *charata*<sup>110</sup> *na dūje*<sup>111</sup> *ranga*.<sup>112</sup> 2.

Mind, leave the company of those who have turned away from Hari;  
 Does a snake ever lose its venom from being given milk?<sup>113</sup> (1) *rahāu*  
 Why feed crows camphor? Why bathe a dog in the Ganges?  
 What use is a paste of perfume on a jackass or jewels on a monkey's arm? (1)  
 A spent arrow can't pierce a stone even if quivers are emptied.<sup>114</sup>  
 Sūrdās, a black blanket can never have a different hue. (2)

A variant reading of the *pada* occurs in a single Adi Granth manuscript dated 1825 VS/1768:<sup>115</sup>

*chhādi mana hari bimukhana ko sangu.*  
*jā ke mile te duramati upajai parata bhajana mai bhangu. 1. rahāu.*  
*kāgā kahā kapūru chugāvata suāna navāvata ganga.*  
*khara kau kahā agari kā lepanu marakaṭa bhukhana anga. 1.*  
*kahā biṣāra kau dūdhu pīāvata bikhu nahī tajai bhuianga.*  
*sūradāsa prabha kārī kamarīā charata na dūsara ranga. 2.*

Mind, leave the company of those who have turned away from Hari,  
 Meeting whom bad intentions are produced and worship is interrupted.  
 (1) *rahāu*  
 Why feed crows camphor? Why bathe a dog in the Gangā?  
 What use a paste of perfume on a jackass or jewels on a monkey's arm? (2)  
 Why feed milk to a venomous one when poison never leaves the snake?  
 Sūrdās's Lord,<sup>116</sup> a black blanket can never have another hue. (3)

The *pada* contains a number of proverbial images, most of which were used in medieval literature to describe the state of those who turn away from the path of devotion: in Sikh sources alone, Kabīr pairs the crow and the snake in a *shabad* in Āsā *rāga* about the impossibility of teaching sinners about Hari, and Bhāī Gurdās reproduces the *pada*'s images, together with similar ones found in the *salokas* of Kabīr, in the first three *paurīs* of his thirty-fifth *vāra*.<sup>117</sup> Other seventeenth-century texts written in Punjab, such as Diāl Anemānand's *Abagata ullāsa* (1732/1675), use some of the images found in the *pada* in a proverbial sense.<sup>118</sup>

The position of the Sūrdās *pada* in Adi Granth textual traditions as a whole

<sup>100</sup> *patita*: O, P, R

<sup>101</sup> *pakhāna*: O, P, R

<sup>102</sup> *na*: B, F, G, H, K, L, Q

<sup>103</sup> *beda*: G; *bedhata*: D, P, R

<sup>104</sup> *rīto*: C, F, M, N

<sup>105</sup> *bhae*: D, E, I, O, P, R (D has the reading *hoi* erased with *harṭāl*); *hoi*: C, F, G, J, L, M, N

<sup>106</sup> *nikhaga*: J; *nikhangu*: B

<sup>107</sup> *vai*: C, I; -: O, R

<sup>108</sup> *kāra*: O

<sup>109</sup> *kamarī*: K, Q; *kamarīā*: I, O, P; *kamarīa*: D

<sup>110</sup> *charata*: I, O, R; *chadhata*: P

<sup>111</sup> *dūjo*: B, C, J, R; *dūsara*: I, O, P; *dūjai*: M; *dūjā*: Q

<sup>112</sup> *rangu*: B

<sup>113</sup> The meaning of the word *pīpāi* is unclear; I have translated the variant reading *pai pāna*.

<sup>114</sup> This line admits a number of readings: it can also be read as 'An arrow can't pierce a stone or a fallen [person] even if quivers are emptied'. Some manuscripts have the reading 'even if the quiver is emptied'.

<sup>115</sup> Punjabi University, Patiala ms. 115464, a Banno text dated Savaṇ 20, 1825 VS/1768.

<sup>116</sup> Or, 'Sūrdās [says,] "O Lord ..."'

<sup>117</sup> AG, p. 481; Bhāī Gurdās, *Vārā*, 372–3.

<sup>118</sup> British Museum ms. Or. 2755, f. 130b (*prayoga* 4:12). Some manuscripts refer to the author as Diāl Anemī and to the text as *Abagata hulāsa*.

is somewhat ambiguous. The complete *pada* does not seem to have been a feature of the Kartārpur and Lahore recensions (those with the greatest claims to antiquity) and would seem to have entered the Banno recension only around the turn of the eighteenth century. The Kartārpur manuscript has only the first line (in the same hand but in another pen) followed by four blank lines, while an undated copy of the text also contains only the single line.<sup>119</sup> A manuscript of part of the *Adi Granth* bearing the signature of the sixth Guru Hargobind and having the textual features of the Kartārpur recension (minus the *Rāgamālā*) contains only the M5 *Sūrdās shabad*.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, manuscripts of the Kartārpur recension written by Rāmraiyyā scribes (members of a schismatic group that followed the eighth Guru's elder brother Rām Rāi) appear to have contained only the M5 *Sūrdās shabad*.<sup>121</sup> Seventeenth-century manuscripts of the Lahore recension do not generally contain even the single line, although some eighteenth-century and later texts do have it.<sup>122</sup> A number of seventeenth-century Lahore recension manuscripts that later had the compositions characteristic of the Banno recension added to them have also had the entire *pada* added in another hand, while one text completed in 1755 VS/1699 and later converted into a Banno text uncharacteristically has the whole *pada* in the hand of the original scribe.<sup>123</sup> Most Banno manuscripts dated before 1700—including the text reputed to be Banno's original and dated 1699 VS/1642—have only the single line. The rest of the *pada* has been added to this manuscript in another hand, and two other Banno texts dated 1744 VS/1687 and 1745 VS/1688 have also had the entire *pada* added in another hand.<sup>124</sup> The earliest extant dated Banno manuscript to contain the whole

<sup>119</sup> Bhāi Jodh Singh, *Srī Kartārpurī bīr*, 113; Pashaura Singh, 'The text and meaning', 32, 36–7.

<sup>120</sup> The manuscript is on display at the Central Sikh Museum, Amritsar. It contains the portion of the *Adi Granth* from Bilāvalu *rāga* to the end of the text, but is numbered continuously from f. 1 as if it is a complete manuscript.

<sup>121</sup> f. 589b of an undated manuscript at Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Dehra Dun bearing the death dates of Rām Rāi and his wife Mātā Panjābo said to have formerly been in possession of the shrine in Dehra Dun dedicated to Rām Rāi. Svāmī Harinām Dās Udāsīn, *Purātani bīrā*, 1:111. Harinām Dās discusses a manuscript dated 1763 VS/1708 bearing the death date of Rām Rāi in its list of the death dates of the Gurus.

<sup>122</sup> Piar Singh cites a manuscript dated 1711 VS/1654, later converted into a Banno text, that has only the second *shabad* (*Gāthā*, 255). Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 1084 (dated 1723 VS/1666) also contains only the second *shabad*, but with a heading that attributes it to *Sūrdās*. A manuscript at Takht Harimandir Sahib, Patna, dated 1748 VS/1692–93 and written by a scribe named Rām Rāi whose index indicates that it is of the Lahore recension does not contain the *Sūrdās pada*. The index and text to Mārū *rāga* are in the hand of the original scribe and the subsequent portion of the text (including Sāranga *rāga*) is in another hand. It later had the compositions usually found at the end of Banno manuscripts added to the end of the volume. A further undated Lahore manuscript at the shrine that appears to predate the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century contains only the M5 *Sūrdās shabad*. An undated manuscript with Baba Sarbjot Singh Bedi of Una that predates the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century has had the single line added in another hand. This is also the case with a no longer extant manuscript dated 1745 VS/1688 cited by Piar Singh (*Gāthā*, 335). Early Lahore recension manuscripts with the single line include Punjabi University, Patiala ms. 115338 dated 1724 VS/1687; Punjabi University Museum, Patiala ms. 6 dated 1749 VS/1692; and a manuscript with the late Trilochan Singh of Ludhiana dated 1762 VS/1705 (the last two cited in Piar Singh, *Gāthā*, 347 and 371).

<sup>123</sup> Piar Singh cites a no longer extant manuscript dated 1667 VS/1610–11 that has had the *pada* added in another hand (*Gāthā*, 223). A manuscript at Takht Sri Harimandir Sahib, Patna, that appears to date from the period 1665–75 and another that appears to predate the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century have also had the *pada* added in another hand.

<sup>124</sup> Early Banno manuscripts containing only the single line include a manuscript at Dera Bhai Ramkishan, Patiala, dated 1710 VS/1653; Punjab State Archives Patiala ms. 341 dated 1723 VS/1666; Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehra Dun acc. no. 4982 dated 1736 VS/1679; and Punjab University, Chandigarh ms. 1189 dated 1748 VS/1691. Piar Singh cites a no longer extant manuscript dated 1732 VS/1675 that had only the single line (*Gāthā*, 312). The entire *pada* has been added in another hand to Punjabi University, Patiala ms. 115152 dated 1744 VS/1687 and the Nand Chand manuscript dated 1745 VS/1688 now at the village of Bhai ki Daroli, district Faridkot (the last cited in Piar Singh, *Gāthā*, 331). For the Banno manuscript, see Pritam Singh, 'Bhāi Banno's copy'.



*pada* in the hand of the original scribe of the text is dated 1758 VS/1702, and most later manuscripts also have the entire text.<sup>125</sup> An undated manuscript written by Guru Gobind Singh's court scribe Haridās is also said to have had the entire *pada*: this text would presumably have been written at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>126</sup> Some later manuscripts, however, continue the earlier Banno textual traditions that excluded the complete *pada*: manuscripts dated 1780 VS/1723, 1806 VS/1749–50, 1828 VS/1771 and 1883 VS/1776 have only the single line, while a text dated 1787 VS/1730 has had the single line itself added in another hand.<sup>127</sup> Finally, a manuscript dated 1728 VS/1671–72 that has scribal features different from the established textual traditions contains only the M5 Sūrdās *shabad*, although it is attributed to Sūrdās alone.<sup>128</sup> In sum, then, it seems that the *pada* was interpolated into the Banno and the composite Lahore-Banno Adi Granth textual traditions at about the turn of the eighteenth century, although some later Banno texts excluded it. Earlier Banno texts had contained only the single line, and it is presumably after the interpolation of the entire *pada* into the recension that some earlier Banno and Lahore texts had the whole *pada* added to them. Early Lahore and Kartārpur recension manuscripts (including those by Rāmraiyyā scribes) did not contain even the single line, while the Kartārpur manuscript itself and the Damdamī recension contained the single line alone. All manuscript traditions had the M5 Sūrdās *shabad* that follows the single line in the printed version of the Adi Granth.

The treatment of the Sūrdās *pada* in Adi Granth manuscript traditions may reflect a wider trend in the way the Panth or some sections of it were beginning to see the Granth around the same period. A manuscript written in 1748 VS/1691–92 displays a marked concern with the correctness of the text,<sup>129</sup> and the eighteenth-century chronicles that furnish us with the first narratives of Guru Arjan's composition of the Adi Granth share a concern with the formation of canon and the exclusion of spurious works from that canon that rises from the position of the Granth as Guru.<sup>130</sup> This position in turn leads to the nineteenth-century view of the Adi Granth as a completely closed text which looks to the 'Bhāi Gurdās' and the 'Damdamī' recensions for validity.<sup>131</sup> This meant, for example, that when the Sodhīs of Kartārpur (custodians of the volume said to be Guru Arjan's original) created a presentation manu-

<sup>125</sup> Manuscript with Prof. Madanjit Kaur of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, f. 499a. Gurditt Singh notes that in a number of Banno manuscripts that originally contained the entire *pada*, all but the first line were later deleted with correction paste (*Itihās*, 327).

<sup>126</sup> For published descriptions of the Haridās manuscript, see Piār Singh, *Gāthā Sṛī Ādi Granth*, 348–50; Svāmī Harinām Dās Udāsīn, *Purātani bīrā* 1:109, 2:79; Haribhajan Singh, *Gurbānī sampādan nirṇai* (Chandigarh: Satinām Prakāshan, 1981), 85, 117, 127, 150.

<sup>127</sup> Manuscripts bearing only the single line in the hand of the original scribe are Panjab University Chandigarh ms. 1191, f. 601b; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. G-98, f. 657b; Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehra Dun acc. no. 4993, f. 499a; and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 729, f. 656b. The single line has been erased with *hartāl* (correction paste) in the Chandigarh manuscript. The manuscript to which the single line has been added is Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehra Dun acc. no. 5005, f. 792a.

<sup>128</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 1229, f. 589b. The manuscript is originally from the village of Sāranke, district Lahore.

<sup>129</sup> The Adi Granth manuscript in question is now at Takht Sri Harimandir Sahib, Patna. A note on f. 27a (now bound at the end of the manuscript) traces its textual lineage to a manuscript in Pushkar corrected against the Granths of Bhāi Gurdās and one Jagnā Brahman. For a published transcription of f. 27a, see Piār Singh 'Padam', *Sṛī Gurū Granth prakāsh*, 105; for a published description of the text, see Piār Singh, *Gāthā Sṛī Ādi Granth*, 339–42.

<sup>130</sup> Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansāvalīnāmā*, 244–5 (*charana* 14:264–9), where both the Adi and the Dasam Granth are considered Guru, and the *rahiṇāmā* attributed to Chaupā Singh Chhibbar, where the injunction is to 'regard the Granth Sāhib as Gurū' (McLeod, *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-nāmā*, 74, 76). In this case, the spurious works are those of the Mīnās.

<sup>131</sup> Santokh Singh, *Sṛī Gura pratāpa sūraja*, 6:2140 (*rāsi* 3.50.6); Bhagat Singh, *Gurabilāsa*, 151 (*adhyāya* 4:409–10).



script in 1859–60 for a translation project proposed by the British Indian government, rather than copying the manuscript in their possession they used a ‘standard’ text of the Adi Granth that excluded ‘apocrypha’ and ‘irrelevant’ material such as listings of the death-dates of the Gurus. A note was appended to the text stating that every one of the 991,032 letters in the volume was a ‘limb of the Guru’.<sup>132</sup> In the context of such conceptions of the Adi Granth, scribal approaches to the Sūrdās text appear to be part of a general attempt to make the text internally consistent.<sup>133</sup> Scribes of each of the Adi Granth textual traditions responded to the problem of the Sūrdās text in different ways, which became codified as copies proliferated. The scribes of the Lahore and Rāmraiyyā traditions generally saw the ‘M5 Sūrdās’ *shabad* as consistent in itself, while scribes of the Kartārpur tradition, most Banno scribes before 1700 and some Lahore tradition scribes related the text to a Sūrdās *pada* by writing its first line. Most post-1700 Banno scribes and those who converted earlier manuscripts of other recensions into Banno texts seem to have seen the single line as an anomaly and expanded it into a full *pada* to make it more ‘consistent’ and ‘comprehensible’ according to their conception of the Adi Granth. Since the Banno recension was the textual tradition that seems to have been seen as ‘authoritative’ by large sections of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Panth, most extant post-1700 Adi Granth manuscripts contain the entire Sūrdās *pada*.

#### *The authorship of the Sūrdās M5 shabad*

The heading and *chhāpa*-line of the second Sāranga *shabad* raise at least two major questions: why do the names of both Sūrdās and Guru Arjan appear in the heading of the *shabad*? And if Guru Arjan composed the *shabad*, why does Sūrdās’s name appear in the final line? The attempt to answer these questions leads to a little-studied aspect of the Adi Granth: the ‘intertextuality’ of certain of its compositions and verses. Intertextuality in the Adi Granth is a complex phenomenon which we may reduce into three general types: the simultaneous attribution of the same composition to two Gurus, to two *bhagats*<sup>134</sup> or to a Guru and a *bhagat* (traditionally assumed to be the Gurus’ ‘commentaries’ on the *bhagat* verses);<sup>135</sup> Adi Granth compositions which correspond to verses from other collections but are attributed to different authors in the Granth;<sup>136</sup>

<sup>132</sup> India Office Library MS Panj. E 2, described in Pashaura Singh, ‘The text and meaning’, 84–6. Pashaura Singh incorrectly states that the manuscript was created for presentation to Queen Victoria; in fact it was presented through the Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar for onward transmission to London as part of a project to translate the Adi Granth into English (India Political Dispatch no. 34 from Secretary of State for India to Governor-General dated 24 April 1860).

<sup>133</sup> For other examples of scribal attempts to ‘rationalize’ a text, in this case by changing headings, see Pashaura Singh, ‘The text and meaning’, 97, 151.

<sup>134</sup> For example, the first *saloka* of Guru Nanak’s *Japu* (p. 1) with the *saloka* preceding *astapadi* 17 of *Gaurī Sukhamanī* M5 (p. 285); the final *saloka* of *Japu* (p. 8) with *Mājha kī vāra* M1 *saloku* M2 2:18 (p. 146); *Srīrāga kī vāra* M4 *saloku* M3 2:11 (p. 86–7) and *Saloka vārā te vadhika* M4 28 (p. 1424); *Gaurī kī vāra* M4 *paurī* M4 12 (p. 306) and *paurī* M5 31 of the same *vāra* (pp. 316–7); *Saloka Sahāskriti* M1 2–4 (p. 1353) with *Mājha kī vāra* M1 *saloku* M2 2:23 (p. 148) and *Āsā kī vāra* M1 *saloku* M2 2–3:12 (p. 469); the *saloku* to Maru M1 5 (p. 990) with *Gūjarī kī vāra* M5 *saloku* M5 2:4 (p. 518); and *salokas* with the *chhāpas* of Nāmdev, Ravidās and Trilochan in the *saloka* sequence of Kabīr (*salokas* 212–3, pp. 241–2).

<sup>135</sup> In *Saloka Pharīda jīu ke* (pp. 1381–4), *salokas* 32, 113, 120, 124 (M1); 13, 52, 104, 122, 123 (M3); 121 (M4). There is also a *saloka* marked M3 with the *chhāpa* Nanak in the sequence of *salokas* by Kabīr (*saloku* 220, p. 1376); the 65th *saloku* of the sequence (p. 1367), which has the *chhāpa* Kabīr, appears on p. 947 of the Adi Granth as a M3 *saloku* with the *chhāpa* Nanak. Neither of these *salokas* appears in any of the other published texts of Kabīr.

<sup>136</sup> For example, *Āsā kī vāra* M1 *saloku* M1 1:1 (pp. 462–3) with *Kabīr Granthāvalī* (Das) 1:2 and (Tivārī) 1:11 in Charlotte Vaudeville (ed.), *Kabīr-Vānī: western recension* (Pondicherry: Institut Français d’Indologie, 1982), pp. 3, 55; *Gaurī* M1 4 (p. 152) and *Granthāvalī* (Dās) *pada* 42



and compositions headed 'Mahalā 5' bearing the *chhāpa* of one of the *bhagats*.<sup>137</sup> All three types of intertextuality raise a number of issues, but the instances where the marker M5 and the *chhāpa* of a *bhagat* are used together bear directly upon the question of the authorship of the M5 Sūrdās *shabad*. There are 13 *salokas* and five *padas* with a dual attribution to Guru Arjan and a *bhagat* in the *Adi Granth*. Since none of the *salokas* are available in other published collections, it is the *padas* that we will examine here: the *chaūpadā* 'aiso acharaja dekhio kabīra' in the *bhagat bānī* section of *Gaurī rāga* with the *chhāpa* Kabīr and a heading that mentions both Kabīr and Guru Arjan; the *chaūpadā* 'gobinda gobinda gobinda sanga nāmadeu manu līnā' in the *bhagat bānī* section of *Āsā rāga* with the *chhāpa* Dhannā; and the heading M5, the *panchpadā* 'varata na rahaū na maha ramadānā' in the M5 section of *Bhairau rāga* with the *chhāpa* Kabīr and the heading M5; the *chaūpadā* 'jo pāthara kaū kahate deva' in the *bhagat bānī* section of *Bhairau rāga* with the *chhāpa* Kabīr and the heading M5 and; of course, the *Sāranga* M5 Sūrdās *shabad*.<sup>138</sup>

The existence of these *shabads* presents at least two interpretative possibilities: the traditional answer that Guru Arjan composed them using the *chhāpas* of the *bhagats*, or the possibility that these compositions represent *bhagat* poems first sung or collected in the lifetime of the fifth Guru and specially marked for that reason. The second of these suppositions finds a certain amount of textual support: the *Bhairau rāga shabad* 'varata na rahaū na maha ramadānā' is present in other published collections of Kabīr's works.<sup>139</sup> An independent seventeenth-century compilation of the Gurus' *bānī* that excludes the compositions of the *bhagats*, however, attributes the same *shabad* to Guru Arjan.<sup>140</sup> The supposition is supported further by the fact that the *Bhairau shabad* 'jo pāthara kaū kahate deva' is attributed to Kabīr in one of the two 'Goindvāl *pothīs*',<sup>141</sup> although it is possible that the compiler of the volume attributed the *shabad* to Kabīr based on its *chhāpa* alone. None of the other three *shabads* seem to be available in published collections outside the *Adi Granth*. Finally, the heading of the *shabad* 'aiso acharaja dekhio kabīra' is often taken to mean that it is a completion by Guru Arjan of an already existing composition by Kabīr (*Gaurī Kabīrajī kī nālī ralāi likhiā M5*, traditionally interpreted to mean '[work of] Kabīr in *Gaurī* added to by M5').<sup>142</sup> It may, however, mean that the *shabad* was added to an already existing corpus of *bhagat bānī* by Guru Arjan, in which case the heading would mean '[work of] Kabīr in *Gaurī*, added [to the section] by M5'. The marker M5 in the

(Vaudeville, *Kabīr-vānī*, 125); *salokas* 36 and 103 of *Saloka Pharīd jū ke* (pp. 1377–84), which correspond to *sākhīs* 3:21 and 41 of the *Dās Granthāvalī* (Vaudeville, *Kabīr-Vānī*, 7–8).

<sup>137</sup> Farīd *salokas* 75, 82, 83, 105, 108–11 (pp. 1377–84); Kabīr *salokas* 209–11, 214, 221 (pp. 1375–6); *Āsā* (Dhannā) M5 2 (pp. 487–88); *Bhairau* M5 *gharu* 1 3 (p. 1136); *Bhairau* (Kabīr) M5 12 (p. 1160); and, of course, *Sāranga* M5 Sūrdās (p. 1253).

<sup>138</sup> AG, pp. 326, 487–8, 1136, 1160 and 1253 respectively.

<sup>139</sup> *Bhairau* M5 *gharu* 1 3 (p. 1136) is a significant variation of *Gopāldās Sarvāngī* 54:5 (in Winand M. Callewaert (ed.), *The Sarvāngī of Gopāldās: a 17th century anthology of Bhakti literature* (Delhi: Manohar, 1993), 288) and *Kabīr Granthāvalī* (Das) 338 (in Vaudeville, *Kabīr-Vānī*, 205); the *Adi Granth* version has a verse not in the *Sarvāngī* and *Granthāvalī* versions. Others of the *shabads* may, of course, be represented in unpublished manuscript traditions outside the Panth.

<sup>140</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 1245, ff. 106ab. The compilation, which does not include the works of the *bhagats*, does not contain any of the other *shabads* with a dual attribution.

<sup>141</sup> The *shabad* is present in the *pothī* now at Jalandhar, see Mann, *The Goindval Pothis*, 79. The two remaining *Adi Granth shabads* are in *Āsā* and *Gaurī rāgas*, neither of which is represented in the two extant *pothīs*.

<sup>142</sup> AG, p. 326. The *shabad* uncharacteristically has two verses containing the *chhāpa* Kabīr. For two interpretations which take the heading to mean that the *shabad* is Guru Arjan's completion of a Kabīr composition, see Bhāi Vīr Singh, *Santhyā Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, vol. iv (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1960), 1946 and Sāhib Singh, *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib darpan*, vol. ii. 2nd ed. (Jalandhar: Raj Publishers, n.d.), 868.



other headings would then also indicate their having been added to the Sikh repertoire of *bhagat* compositions by the fifth Guru. There is, however, not enough evidence about the authorship of the *shabads* to warrant this conclusion: they may in fact represent compositions of the *bhagats* gathered during Guru Arjan's lifetime, or they may equally have been attributed to or otherwise connected with him by the contemporary Sikh community.

One of the primary tools for determining the attribution of the M5 Sūrdās *shabad* would seem to be the Adi Granth's numbering system. We have already noted that the numbering of the full M5 Sūrdās *shabad* seems to imply that it is by a different author to the single line that precedes it. On the other hand, the only one of the Kabīr-Guru Arjan *shabads* that has an analogue in non-Sikh Kabīr collections is clearly numbered as a Guru Arjan composition, while both the Bhairau *shabad* in the *bhagat bānī* section and the *shabad* in Āsā rāga with the *chhāpa* Dhannā are numbered as if they are the work of the appropriate *bhagat*. The *shabad* in Gaurī rāga, often supposed to be Guru Arjan's completion of a Kabīr composition, is numbered as if it were not part of the series of Kabīr compositions. These seeming inconsistencies mean that we cannot rely on numbering alone to establish the authorship of the Sūrdās *shabad*.

The only other source of internal evidence for the attribution of the second Sūrdās *shabad* is its heading. Leaving aside the *shabad* in Gaurī rāga, the other three *bhagat*-Guru Arjan texts are headed simply 'M5', while the heading of the Sāranga *shabad* seems to own two authors ('Sāranga M5 Sūradāsa').<sup>143</sup> A notation in a seventeenth-century independent compilation of the *bānī* not present in the printed Adi Granth opens up the possibility that the form of the Sāranga rāga heading means that some scribes at least saw this *shabad* as a composition of Guru Arjan. This manuscript—along with some early Adi Granth manuscripts—makes the observation that the fourth *shabad* in the section of Dhanāsari rāga reserved for compositions by the first Guru is by the third Guru; this text heads the *shabad*, which appears to 'respond' to the *shabad* of Guru Nanak which precedes it, 'Dhanāsari Mahalā 1.3' and its index firmly attributes it to Guru Amardas.<sup>144</sup> If the heading of the Sāranga rāga *shabad* is meant to be read in the same way as this heading, we would appear to have found some support for the notion that scribes attributed this text to Guru Arjan even though it bears the *chhāpa* Sūrdās. Neither this evidence nor the numbering of the *shabad* takes us any further than when we started, though.

In any case, this *shabad* and the others marked as *bhagat*-Guru Arjan texts raise the issue of how the Gurus and the early Panth saw themselves in relation to the *bhagats*. We have seen that at least some sections of the early Panth associated the *bhagats* with Guru Nanak and that the text of the Adi Granth extends the identification of Guru with *bhagat* through the phenomenon of intertextuality. But *shabads* and *salokas* with a dual attribution may extend this relationship in a conscious, self-reflexive way: perhaps Guru Arjan the

<sup>143</sup> A Lahore recension manuscript dated 1723 VS/1666 attributes the *shabad* to Sūrdās with the heading 'bānī bhagata Sūradāsa jiu kī' (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 1084, f. 399a old numbering/384a new numbering). The manuscript dated 1758 VS/1701 with Prof. Madanjit Kaur of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (f. 499a) and the Sāranke manuscript dated 1728 VS/1671-2 attribute the *shabad* to Sūrdās by excluding reference to Guru Arjan through the simple heading 'Sāranga' (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 1229, f. 589b). An undated Lahore recension manuscript from Benares and a Banno manuscript also from Benares dated 1842 VS/1785 (copied from a text dated 1788 VS/1731) both head the *shabad* 'Sāranga Mahalā 5' (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar mss. G-74, f. 525a and G-62, f. 742a).

<sup>144</sup> Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar ms. 1245, ff. 565b and 561a. Pashaura Singh notes a number of other manuscripts which attribute this *shabad* to Guru Amardas—including the 'Goindvāl' and Kartārpur texts—but does not state whether they also have headings with a dual attribution ('The text and meaning', 151 note 25).



poet can assume the authority and the voice of the *bhagats* as naturally as he can that of Guru Nanak. In other words, if this supposition is correct, Guru Arjan has in one sense formalized the fluid identity of the oral tradition poet: he is at once a Nanak, a Sūrdās, a Kabīr and a Dhannā, authorizing his words with the personality that is most appropriate to the occasion. A story in Sevā Dās Udāsī's *Parachī* (1741) makes the same point in a different way, presenting the *shabads* in a context that sees Guru Arjan offer his poetry to the authors whose *chhāpas* he uses:<sup>145</sup>

Once Guru Arjan Nāth Jī said, 'All the *bāṇī* I have uttered I have dedicated (*bheṭ kīṁī*) to Guru Nanak; I will present some to the other *sants*'. Then he presented six *shabads* to the *bhagats*. He uttered them himself and added the *bhoga* [*chhāpa*] of the *bhagats*. [Here the story adds the five *shabads* we have noted and a composition in Āsā *rāga* that the published text attributes to Farīd]

Both the story and the *shabads* it tries to explain have significance not only as a problem in textual and oral transmission but also as indications of the early Panth's conception of its relationship to other north Indian poetic and devotional traditions. What the story certainly does not say is that the poetic authority of these *bhagats* was as weighty for the fifth Guru and his followers as that of Guru Nanak, which hardly seems likely to have been the case anyhow. The story also provides no clue as to whether the Sikh Gurus or their followers regularly composed poetry using a *chhāpa* other than 'Nanak'. Like the early *Gurabilāsa* texts, though, it does indicate that the relationship of the Gurus to the *bhagats* was of some significance to the eighteenth-century Panth and requires further study.

### Conclusion

Despite the paucity of early Sikh sources on Sūrdās, an examination of the available material yields significant information on the pre-modern understanding of the Adi Granth and the relationship between Sikh and other traditions of writing on the *bhagats*. Early scribal attempts to deal with the *pada* in Sāranga *rāga* indicate the increasing importance attached to the completeness and consistency of manuscripts of the Adi Granth at the same time as they help to distinguish the different textual recensions that were available before the introduction of the standard printed text. The supplement to the *pada* raises a number of important issues about the text of the *bhagat bāṇī* in the Adi Granth, the history of its introduction into the Granth and the relationship between the Gurus and the *bhagats*. A study of Sikh accounts of Sūrdās reveals both the importance of the exegetical literature of 'heterodox' groups for any understanding of the early period and also the extent to which later mainstream writing was influenced by pan-north Indian texts and traditions. Although a search for the Sūrdās of Sikh tradition provides us with relatively few firm answers about his identity and the authorship of the second *shabad* in Sāranga *rāga* bearing his *chhāpa*, it does help to re-orient debate on the nature of early Sikh textual and exegetical traditions.

<sup>145</sup> Sevā Dās, *Parachī*, 31–3.

## COMPETING VISIONS OF SIKH RELIGION AND POLITICS: THE CHIEF KHALSA DIWAN AND THE PANCH KHALSA DIWAN, 1902-1928

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**S**IKHS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD ARE ENGAGED IN A VERY PUBLIC struggle over control of institutions, debates over theology and history, and varying attempts to fuse religion and politics. A persistent crisis of identity underpins much of the activism. What often is ignored, both by the Sikhs and outside observers, however, is that the issues and confrontations are not new. Since the wave of reform and revival associated with the Singh Sabha movement a century ago, Sikhs have been struggling to define themselves and to institutionalise that understanding in public arenas. This essay explores a pivotal phase in recent Sikh history, the short-lived campaign of the Chief Khalsa Diwan [CKD] to unify Sikhs around a common platform of tradition, religious belief, and politics.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Sikhs and other Punjabis engaged in a changing political process associated with British rule. Access to power and resources involved a mixture of patronage and competition in a growing array of institutions. Also offering opportunities and potential threats were the injection of western ideas and missionary campaigns, along with new educational facilities, western courts and practices, a print culture, and communication facilitated by the post, telegraph, railways, and new roads.



This led to shifting social relations and a dynamic phase of institution-building and conflict revolving around religion and new associations.<sup>1</sup>

The resulting revitalisation of Sikh religion and institutions became identified with the activities of the Singh Sabha movement. Between 1875 and 1900, individual Sikhs and new or revived organisations grappled with what it meant to be a Sikh in a rapidly changing world. The outline of what transpired is known, especially the Singh Sabha contribution to separation from Hinduism and a re-evaluation of religious texts and history combined with emphasis on cultural markers and boundaries. However, the Singh Sabhas left much unanswered and undefined. 'Ham Hindu Nahin' (We are not Hindus) stressed religious and ethnic identity, but specifics about key matters involving social practice, women, caste, and untouchability remained disputed. Existing practice and diversity had to be reconciled with a fresh vision of Sikh religion and politics, and most vexing, the question of who could interpret tradition, and how such interpretations could be communicated and routinised. Recent literature on the period suggests extreme fragmentation, with competing groups and two constellations of Singh Sabhas based on different social and cultural networks.<sup>2</sup>

In the early 1900s, the newly formed CKD in Amritsar attempted to consolidate organisations, ideology and strategy. This paper addresses how the Diwan functioned, and some of its successes and problems while routinising and building on the select initiatives of the earlier Singh Sabhas. Understanding this transitional point in modern Sikhism also involves examination of competing interpretations of tradition and organisation. The second section thus will focus on the often different program of the Bhasaur Singh Sabha and the Panch Khalsa Diwan. A brief conclusion reviews the contributions of the two, their eclipse in the 1920s, and the implications of that experience for contemporary Sikhism.

### **The Chief Khalsa Diwan and a changing Sikh world**

Prior to 1900, Sikhs had been at war with each other and external foes. Two networks of Singh Sabhas engaged in the battle for legitimacy and control of resources. The Lahore and Amritsar Khalsa Diwans shared some beliefs, but differed on specific and sometimes critical issues. Labelled 'Sanatan' Sikhs, the Amritsar group accepted diverse traditions and supported local custom in

<sup>1</sup> Background in Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharm* (Berkeley, University of California, 1975); Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1988). Background on underlying issues and contemporary Sikhism in 'Sikh Identity in Historical and Contemporary Perspective', in Pashaura Singh (ed.), *Sikh Identity* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> On the Singh Sabha movement, Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries* (New Delhi, OUP, 1994); N. G. Barrier, *Sikhs and Their Literature* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1970).



defining Sikh identity. The self-designated 'Tat Khalsa' centred at Lahore also saw Sikhism in danger, but fashioned a different view of the past and offered new solutions to present and future challenges. The primacy of *amritdharis* and *kesdharis* in Sikh public life (baptised Sikhs and unbaptised Sikhs who maintained symbols including uncut hair), firm rejection of Hindu practice, and a renewed commitment to the *Adi Granth* as the single source for theology and authority were their hallmarks, as well as concerted efforts to eliminate popular customs and to strengthen Sikh cultural boundaries.

The dramatic struggle involved moulding public opinion, adapting to the challenges of the colonial world, and developing an alliance system balancing the Sikh public with inputs from the princely states and the British. Both competitors responded to the new print culture and published a flood of tracts and newspapers. Each used social networks and ostracism to mobilise support and undermine opposition. Possibly most important, Lahore and Amritsar utilised new public transportation and communication opportunities to link rural and urban organisations that would bolster their positions. By the late 1890s, the dynamism of the 'Tat Khalsa' movement and its superior ability to organise and communicate strengthened the centrality of the Lahore group, although Ditt Singh, Gurmukh Singh and their followers lost a few contests including the location of Khalsa College in Amritsar. Court cases, the pressure of constant conflict, and ultimately, the death of aging leaders in Lahore, however, set the stage for a realignment among Singh Sabhas. A new generation, assembled in Amritsar, but with significant support from Lahore and outposts such as Rawalpindi and Ferozepur, therefore initiated the unification of competing ideologies and organisations.<sup>3</sup>

Several groups contested for Sikh leadership in 1901, but after extensive negotiations, major representatives gathered in November and decided to have one central Diwan. Circulars for advice and affiliation were sent to Singh Sabhas, and on 30 October 1902, delegates from across the Punjab met in Amritsar to establish the CKD. Teja Singh from Bhasaur offered prayers, and an array of speakers including religious leaders and scholars discussed the Diwan's operation. With a pledge of transitional funding from Sundar Singh Majithia and passage of a constitution, the CKD immediately engaged in the dual process of strengthening the community and defending its interests.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On the transition, Surjit Singh Narang, 'Chief Khalsa Diwan', in Paul Wallace, Surendra Chopra (eds.), *Political Dynamics and Crisis in Punjab* (Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev. University), 1988, pp. 70-86; Barrier, 'The Singh Sabhas and the Evolution of Modern Sikhism', in Robert Baird (ed.) *Religion in Modern India* (New Delhi, Manohar, rev. ed., 1989), pp. 192-223.

<sup>4</sup> Background on formation in Lakshman Singh, *Autobiography*, Ganda Singh (ed.) (Calcutta, Sikh Cultural Center, 1965). Also article on the CKD in Harbans Singh (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 1 (Patiala, Punjabi University, 1995), pp. 461-65. Subsequent notes based



The stated goals of the CKD, as reflected in its public statements and internal debates, involved four interrelated themes. First, the CKD pursued establishing and broadening its legitimacy in Sikh public life. Unification was critical for Sikh survival, as its English-language spokesman, the *Khalsa Advocate*, noted in an editorial, 'It is only the Chief Khalsa Diwan through which the aspirations and grievances of the Sikh public can be formulated, religious differences settled, and public opinion directed into proper channels.'<sup>5</sup> This meant consolidation of existing organisations and creation of new ones as necessary, all with pronounced CKD leadership. Also inherent in CKD strategy was making Amritsar and the Khalsa College the central focus of Sikh attention and resources.

The creation in 1904 of a potential competitor, the Majha Khalsa Diwan, illustrates how the CKD negotiated and attempted to incorporate new activists. Based first in Kairon and then Tarn Taran, the Majha group held monthly meetings, sent out preachers and tried to reform religious fairs. Its aggressive actions led to confrontations with authorities in several shrines and a broadening social and political program. As early as 1905, the CKD's Executive Committee evaluated the matter and then decided to initiate a process of affiliation with a time table and specific expectations. Initially the rival rejected overtures, but finally in 1908, when tensions between Majha Sikhs and those in neighbouring regions threatened unity, the Majha association merged with the CKD and became the Majha Prachar Sub-Committee. By 1910 it had lost a separate identity although several of its educational and *prachar* (preaching) institutions continued to prosper as CKD units.<sup>6</sup>

Consolidation and self-strengthening also rested on British cooperation. As a minority community, Sikh success meant balancing a strategy of self-help and self-sufficiency (the expression 'God Helps Them Who Help Themselves' appears often in CKD journals and tracts) with dependence on colonial patronage. The implications of such an approach, which involved loyalty as well as the ability to demonstrate a community unified behind the CKD, will be examined subsequently.

Secondly, the CKD worked hard to project a vision of Sikhism led by *amritdhari* and *kesdhari* Sikhs focussing on specific cultural boundaries, earlier themes among reformers. However, the CKD judged inclusion and compromise essential if Sikhism was to survive and prosper, and accordingly,

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heavily on three sources: CKD Mgt. Com. Minutes [hereafter CKD], *Khalsa Advocate* [hereafter KA] and *Khalsa Samachar* [hereafter KS]. Review of history in KA, 1-15 Apr. 1905; CKD, 10 Nov. 1901.

<sup>5</sup> 'Chief Khalsa Diwan and Its Mission', KA, 8 Mar. 1905.

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 2, pp. 482-4; *Khalsa Diwan Majha Di Salana Report 436 Samvar* (Kairon, Khalsa Diwan Majha, 1905); CKD, 12 Feb. 1905, Dec. 1907-Jan. 1908.

tended to avoid inflammable and divisive issues. Specifically, the Diwan talked in generalities on many problems or when discussing 'the Sikh nation' or the Khalsa. Clearly *sahajdhari*s and others supporting Singh Sabha initiatives were to be included in all panthic business as full members of the Sikh brotherhood.

Attention to consolidating Sikhs of all stripes related to another priority, protecting Sikhism against internal and external dangers. From CKD perspective, perhaps the greatest threat came Sikhs themselves. Division, regional commitment, caste networks, personality cults – all were basic elements in Sikh life to be confronted and resolved in a more or less harmonious fashion. If some Sikhs could not be reconciled, most notably those aligning with Hindus and misusing public resources such as gurdwaras, they should be marginalised and if necessary, driven away.

Outside threats were easier to identify and confront. The CKD continued the Singh Sabha battle with Hinduism, and more specifically, with the activist Arya Samaj. Several journalistic critics became favourite targets, the allegedly pro-Hindu Lahore *Tribune*, and the obviously pro-Arya Samaj Lahore *Panjabee*. The Arya challenge had to be met in the streets, in wars of printed word, and in the courts. Muslims seemed to pose a less serious danger although the CKD occasionally addressed Sikh-Muslim issues. Missionaries also received attention but in a more conciliatory fashion, often seen as effective models (as was the Arya Samaj) for developing new Sikh strategies for self-defence.

Finally, the CKD tried to expand the Singh Sabha mission of defining 'Who is a Sikh' and basic Sikh practice and authority patterns. This proved most problematic because specificity in doctrinal or ritual questions could be divisive and threaten fragile alliances. The Diwan pursued reviving practices judged central to Sikhism and reforming others that posed a threat to Sikh progress, but always with an eye to compromise and nurturing a sense of broad acceptance within the community. For example, the CKD moved gingerly in contentious matters such as dealing with low caste Sikhs, assembling a guide to Sikh practices, and reforming Sikh gurdwaras and shrines. Other boundary markers and problems received more attention, with successes in legitimising Panjabi both as a regional and a distinctly Sikh language, the creation and public acceptance of Sikh holidays, fighting for Sikh dietary requirements, and defending symbols (especially the turban and the kirpan).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Evaluation of political success in Barrier, 'The Formulation and Transmission of Sikh Tradition, in Pashaura Singh, N. G. Barrier (eds), *Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1996), pp. 192-213.



The CKD's formal structure and its informal means of running an expanding central institution reflected these priorities. The constitution set up an affiliation process, including a statement that members had to agree with the goals of the Diwan, and membership gradually grew to over a hundred Sabhas and other organisations by 1911. The Diwan had a complex set of committees and procedures for conducting business. A general committee had representatives from member institutions, the princely states, individuals meeting fiscal and service requirements, and observers from the four *takhis* (traditional centres associated with the gurus). That body in turn elected an executive or managing committee that met monthly and conducted regular business, referring critical issues to the larger committee (usually meeting every six months or in emergency session). In addition several standing committees dealt with legal, administrative, and religious matters.

The Managing Committee ran the organisation, often with sessions that went on for a day or longer. Usually seven to twelve members attended, and chairmanship rotated. Yielding to pressure from Lahore, the Diwan held a few meetings there and elsewhere, but most activities centred in Amritsar, notably at the homes of leading supporters such as Sundar Singh Majithia. From the outset, only *amritdhari* Sikhs could be voting members of the Diwan, with semi-annual and special meetings generally open to all. In addition, the Diwan made special arrangements for *sahajdhari* participation in all committees and special events. Many influential Sikhs in the Punjab were not *amritdhari*, and hence, every effort was made to include them in panthic affairs.<sup>8</sup>

Despite its constitutional trappings, a relatively small group of Sikhs controlled the CKD. The friends, business partners, journalists and educators at the helm constituted a new Sikh cultural élite. These included activists from key Singh Sabhas such as Rawalpindi and Ferozepur, sants (revered holy men) and other regional leaders sharing CKD values, contributors to Sikh educational activities (especially Khalsa College), lawyers, businessmen and aristocrats who combined historical pedigrees with western education and progressive ideas. Generally drawn from the Jat or commercial castes, members of Diwan committees had personal support groups and recognition within their own regions.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Based primarily on CKD, editorials, reports in *KA*, *KS*. Especially useful are discussions CKD, 11 Apr., 3 July, 4 Oct., 1904. The CKD and for that matter many Sikhs in the period did not differentiate carefully between baptised and *kesdhari* Sikhs.

<sup>9</sup> Background on leaders based on CKD, journal accounts. Despite questionable interpretations, a valuable British overview is in Petrie's secret CID report, 'Memorandum on Recent Developments in Sikh Politics, 1911', reprinted in *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. IV, pt. 2 (Oct. 1970), pp. 300-79.



Sundar Singh Majithia undeniably provided the core leadership for the Diwan. An landed aristocrat with a degree earned at Aitchison and Government Colleges Lahore, Sundar Singh became an activist in the Amritsar Khalsa Diwan and was known early for service at Khalsa College. He received substantial aid from his father-in-law, Attar Singh Bhadaur, a patron in the Singh Sabha movement and fervent supporter of Panjabi as the Sikh language. After helping found the CKD, Majithia served as its secretary until 1920. Sundar Singh used his networks in the Majha region to develop support for the College and the Diwan, combining a knack for public speaking with skills in manoeuvring behind the scenes to reach consensus and mould public opinion. His resources were dedicated to building the Diwan as a central organisation, while at the same time cultivating good relations with the British.

Several of Majithia's closest colleagues helped guide the Diwan. Trilochan Singh was a prominent lawyer in Amritsar and managed the Punjab Sindh Bank, essentially a Sikh financial institution supporting Diwan activities. Rai Bahadur Sadhu Singh, a retired government official, was known for his zealous spirit especially championed the Diwan's initiatives concerning orphans and untouchables. The titular president of the Diwan on many occasions, Bhai Arjan Singh Bagarian, was an aristocrat recognised in Malwa as a religious leader. Takht Singh, known as *zinda shahid* (living martyr) because of his commitment to female education, often made the long trip from Ferozepur to Amritsar for meetings and strategy sessions. Strong support also came from a Khalsa College contingent including Narain Singh, Headmaster, and Professor Jodh Singh, M.A. and three intellectuals and publicists vital to the Diwan communications: Bhai Vir Singh (editor of the *Khalsa Samachar* and master of the Khalsa Tract Society), Kahan Singh Nabha (perennial head of the Religion Sub-Committee and resident scholar for the Diwan), and Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid (a master pamphleteer and activist concerned with gurdwara reform and ritual issues).<sup>10</sup>

Although involved in many enterprises, Diwan leaders focussed on two integral processes. First, they gave priority to communications and mobilisation. The Diwan built on an inherited network of organisations and journals and dominated the print culture affecting Sikhs. Founded before the CKD, the *Khalsa Samachar* became its Panjabi language spokesman, joined shortly by the English-language *Khalsa Advocate*. Both hammered home the CKD messages, fought battles with opponents, and served as a forum for discussion and reports of activities from CKD supporters throughout the

<sup>10</sup> Background on leaders in articles, *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*. Also information in Gurnam Singh Rekhi, *Sir Sundar Singh Majithia and His Relevance in Sikh Politics* (New Delhi, Har Anand, 1999); many editorials and accounts of life in KA, KS.



world. Formed in 1907, the Sikh Handbill Committee produced over a million handbills distributed widely and with the stated goal of influencing the masses, thus supplementing the longer productions of the Tract Society.<sup>11</sup>

Again building on a Singh Sabha legacy, the Diwan reorganised the preaching or *parcharak* mission. Training and supervision of the emissaries travelling throughout India and beyond received considerable care and resources. All participants had to be *amritdhari*, sign affidavits committing themselves to CKD loyalty and instruction, and present careful records. As in other enterprises, the CKD routinised existing programs, making them part of a larger effort to influence the public. Another such initiative involved the annual diwans held throughout the Punjab. Using telegraph, postal facilities and journalism effectively, the CKD gradually controlled the timing and to a large extent the agendas of the district or regional melas.<sup>12</sup>

The Sikh Educational Conference, founded in 1908, became the centre piece of CKD activities. Modelled in part upon the Muslim Educational Conference, the organisation was dedicated to promoting education and literacy among Sikhs. From the outset, however, the Conference clearly provided an annual opportunity to muster resources and to work up community spirit beyond an agenda relating to schools. Although political subjects were expressly forbidden, 'education' came to mean resolutions and discussion of a variety of subjects. At the second conference in 1909, for example, these topics received attention: Punjabi in the post, courts, railways and educational system (with resolutions to the British); the wearing of turbans in courts and schools; Sikh holidays; production of Panjabi literature; special scholarships for Sikhs; and finally, contributing part of expenses for rites of passage (birth, marriage, death) to the CKD along with shares of tithes (*dasvandh*).<sup>13</sup> The CKD kept tight reins over the Conference. The initial plans for the organisation did not highlight the CKD, but in the final rules, the Diwan's Educational Committee supervised all administrative and fiscal matters, and all schools receiving aid had to be officially affiliated with the Diwan and accept its edicts. The Diwan specifically built in the definition

11 On tracts and communications, Mohan Singh Vaid diaries in Munsha Singh Dukhi (ed.) *Jivan Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohan Singhji Vaid* (Amritsar, n.p., n.d.) Also Barrier, 'Vernacular Publishing and Sikh Public Life in the Punjab', in Kenneth Jones (ed.), *Religious Controversy in British India* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1991), 200-26.

12 Approximately half of CID business focussed on issues relating to preaching. Especially useful are discussions in CKD, June-July 1906, on controls over *parcharaks*.

13 *Second Sikh Educational Conference Report* (Amritsar, CKD, 1909). also background in *Tribune*, 6 March, 1908; KA articles, 6 Feb. 1908-23 May 1908. 'We do not think there exists any idiot who would be blackheaded enough to question the supreme necessity of this nascent educational movement of ours being directly under the control and supervision of the CKD.' KA, 8 Feb., 1908.



of 'Sikh' as including *sahajdhari*s, and in fact, many non-*amritdhari* leaders contributed strongly to central and local schools.<sup>14</sup>

Concern with Punjabi, scholarships, resources for the community – all point to a second and in time the most difficult aspect of CKD assumptions and strategies, the attempt to grapple with the relationship between Sikh religion and politics. From the outset, the Diwan had included strengthening of the panth and representation of its needs and expectations as an important goal. That was part of a larger view of politics inherent in its programs. Majithia and his colleagues realised that constitutional agitation involving discussions with the British would be meaningless unless the CKD could demonstrate that it controlled resources and was seen by most if not all Sikhs as a legitimate source of authority and decision-making. Only if the internal struggle for paramountcy could be won and Sikhs unified under one banner would their claims be put forth effectively.

CKD political strategy therefore rested on four connected programs. First, internal conflict had to be addressed. The history of the Diwan's first years is filled with battles against Sikh opponents over issues ranging from control of Khalsa College and other institutions to encounters with temple officials and the remnants of the old Amritsar Khalsa Diwan associated with Khem Singh Bedi and Avtar Singh Vahiria. Just as the Majha Khalsa Diwan was brought under the CKD umbrella, for example, other former Diwan associates formed a new Central Khalsa Diwan based in Malwa. Bhai Arjan Singh Bagarian led the movement, with aid from officials in Patiala and neighbouring states. The dynamics underlying the move are not entirely clear, but the CKD apparently took the initiative seriously and tried several times to work out an alliance. As the *Khalsa Advocate* noted in December 1909, Sikhs hoped that the new Diwan would be a source of unification and not create problems sapping the strength of the Panth.<sup>15</sup>

At approximately the same time, a prominent Sikh, Gurbaksh Singh, accepted an invitation to be President of the Punjab Hindu conference and to the chagrin of many Sikhs, announced publicly that Sikhs were Hindu. Literally dozens of meetings, telegrams and deputations coordinated by the CKD attempted to neutralise this threat, but even though successful in showing at least to the Singh Sabha constituency the errors of his ways, the

<sup>14</sup> *Sahajdhari*s participated fully in all education proceedings and headed up important schools and initiatives in Western Punjab, Sind and the United Provinces. On how CKD policies affected one community see, Jaswant Singh, *The Lubanas in the Punjab* (Begowal, Murabia Publishers, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> KA, 11 Dec. 1909. Also full discussion, CKD minutes, 1909-1910. British weekly CID reports trace the factions, splits and new organisations, with varying accuracy (Home Political files, National Archives, India).



incident pointed to the need for ongoing vigilance and carefully orchestrated public response to any such internal danger.<sup>16</sup>

Meeting any external threat was seen as crucial if Sikhism would survive as a distinct religion. The old *khandan-mandan* (attack-defend) ethos so prevalent two decades earlier kept reappearing as the CKD grappled with Sikhs' persistent minority status. Every census, report, pamphlet, and article from particularly the Hindu side received careful and public scrutiny. 'Sikhism in danger' frequently appeared in editorials and tracts. Actually the statistics from education and census reports often were misinterpreted by the Diwan, but no matter – part of the agenda was mobilising Sikhs as a beleaguered community. Martyrdom, especially relating to Muslims, became increasingly highlighted to the point that any Sikh punished or even executed for anti-Muslim and pro-Sikh actions immediately became a defender of the faith.<sup>17</sup>

Courting the Sikh princely states and the British raj were the final two political elements in the CKD's program. Nabha and Patiala generated nervous scrutiny, with any changes in officials interpreted in terms of political drift within the state and possible decline in Sikh influence. From the Diwan's perspective, the Sikh princes had the resources and potentially the authority to provide major aid. As such, they had to be given great honour and respect, and any negative comments tended to be muted and offered as 'friendly advice.'<sup>18</sup>

Balancing requests for patronage with criticism of specific policies proved far more difficult in terms of Sikh relations with the raj. A constant drumbeat of loyal protestations filled Sikh newspapers, public declarations, and memorials, accelerating to almost a fever pitch at critical junctures. Sikhs were active players in the common political game of trying to prove loyalty while undercutting opponents by labelling them 'seditious'. The CKD's public announcements in response to the 1907 disturbances, violent attacks on officials, or major events such as the spread of Ghadar sympathisers across Punjab are cases in point.<sup>19</sup> Yet more and more Sikhs expected the CKD to be successful in wresting concessions from the British.

<sup>16</sup> Almost every issue of *KA*, *KS* and the *Tribune*, Sept.-Dec. 1910 contains stories on agitation over the issue.

<sup>17</sup> For example, events surrounding hanging of Lachman Singh, KC, 26 June, 5 Aug., 1909 and Sikh response.

<sup>18</sup> Patiala was presented as the ultimate political authority for Sikhs. discussion in *KA*, *KS* Aug. 1905, *KS* 10 Aug. 1916.

<sup>19</sup> *KA*, *KS* editorials on major incidents. Also, overview in Barrier, 'Sikh Politics in British Punjab', in J. T. O'Connell (ed.), *Sikh History and Religion in the 20th Century* (Toronto, Centre for South Asia Studies, 1988), pp. 174-90.



Two incidents reflect the CKD's approach to politics and the strengths and weaknesses of its strategy. The first involved *anand* marriage, represented by the Diwan and later observers as a major victory for the Tat Khalsa and Sikh reformers. As the case with other episodes, however, results were mixed and tended to reflect limitations affecting the CKD's effectiveness.

Earlier Tat Khalsa activists had made performance of a distinctly Sikh marriage ceremony the centrepiece of demarcating religious and ritual boundaries. The Chief Khalsa Diwan argued continually that *manmat* (wilful action, not in Sikh tradition) marriage ceremonies incorporating Brahmins, a fire ceremony, and Vedic incantations must be challenged and replaced by a simplified *anand* marriage ceremony with Sikh principles, the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, and practices legitimised by the Gurus and supposedly prevalent earlier. Also often portrayed as a struggle against the Arya Samaj and aggressive Hindu attacks, the issue took on new dimensions in the fall of 1908 when the Maharaja of Nabha introduced an *anand* marriage bill in the Imperial Legislature.

The 'Bill To Give Legal Sanction to a Marriage Ceremony Common among the Sikhs Called Anand' would come into force immediately throughout British India. All marriages and remarriages conducted according to the Sikh ceremony should be considered valid, but nothing in the act would apply to a marriage which had been judicially declared void, or any marriage contracted 'by such persons as are related to each other in any of the degrees of consanguinity or affinity prohibited among the Sikhs'. The bill clearly would be a validating act clarifying legal issues and incorporating new principles. While a Select Committee evaluated the proposal, the Punjab erupted in massive agitation.

The press attacks and public meetings generated an outcry never witnessed before in the province. Arya Samaj, Hindu, and some Sikh sympathisers organised quickly, using historical and religious texts to challenge *anand* as a legal ceremony. The stakes were high because successful legislation would create a permanent demarcation. The mobilising capacity of the CKD also became apparent as Sikhs throughout the world held meetings, sent in resolutions, and supported both the bill and the CKD as the leader in the fight to save Sikhism. A surprising feature of the agitation involved its breadth. Over four hundred meetings occurred in a short period of time, and the appearance of well-orchestrated petitions from numerous village and other sabhas not officially linked to the Diwan registered the ability of preachers and organised groups, *jathas*, to reach Sikhs in the farthest locale.



The CKD championed the bill and challenged the argument that *anand* would split the community: 'We cannot stick to old rites in the name of union or for fear of disunion.'<sup>20</sup> Concern over disagreements on details and possible resistance from traditional sources of authority such as the *takhts*, however, tempered its public pronouncements. Resolutions from the Sikh shrines in February and March dispelled some fears, but as key intellectuals and groups began to discuss the implications of the legislation, disturbing new arguments emerged. Some questioned the unspecific nature of the legislation, others said that the bill should be amended so that all Sikhs had to follow *anand* procedures.

The disagreement intensified after Sundar Singh Majithia replaced Nabha on the Council in September and in essence became the primary Sikh spokesman. Addressing Sikh dissent, he noted that the bill was only permissive and legitimised current practice: 'it is necessary to save the poor and most backward Sikh community, the loyal subjects of His Majesty the King Emperor, from the ruinous effects of litigation, and also from the rather provoking insinuations of some interested parties who do not hesitate to question the legitimacy of the offspring of such marriages.'<sup>21</sup> On cue, massive meetings attended by 'Singhs and *sahajdharis* alike' supported the bill and portrayed Sundar Singh and the Diwan as the true leaders of modern Sikhism.

The report of the Select Committee two weeks later sparked another outbreak. Three major changes appeared in the revised draft. First, Section 3(a) said that 'nothing in the act would apply to any marriages between persons not professing the Sikh religion'. Section 4 underscored the permissive nature of the bill, stating that any marriage duly 'solemnised according to any other marriage ceremony customary among the Sikhs' would be valid. Finally, Section 4 said nothing would invalidate any marriage 'which is prohibited by the personal law of the Sikhs.' A rising Sikh opinion supported the view that either these clauses be modified or the bill must be dropped. Letters and resolutions questioned the legislation's permissive nature and called for renaming the bill a 'Sikh marriage act' to make the ceremonies the standard Sikh practice. Secondly, 'not professing the Sikh religion' opened the possibility that *sahajdharis* might be legally designated as 'non-Sikhs'. Thirdly, the courts might interpret 'personal law', as in the earlier Dyal Singh will case, to include Hindu practices and deprive Sikhs of usages based on practice and scripture. Dissents also began to question Majithia's

<sup>20</sup> KA, 23 Jan. 1909. Background in Oberoi, *Construction; Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 1, pp. 126-28; Talwar, 'Anand Marriage Act', in *Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. 2 (1968), pp. 400-10. Full documentation on the agitation and legislation is in KS, KA, 1909.

<sup>21</sup> KA, 4 Sept. 1909. Background on Majithia and the issue, including documents, in Gurdev Singh Deol, *Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia* (Amritsar, Khalsa College, 1992), pp. 81-97.



role in the legislative debate. Why had he permitted such changes, and could he be effective in responding to the concerns of the community?<sup>22</sup>

Stunned by the massive reaction, the British postponed discussion and finally worked out a compromise that seemed to address Sikh concerns. Sundar Singh had to modify the bill because failure would undercut the CKD and his personal leadership. For example, a public meeting of the Lahore Khalsa Diwan sent a telegram demanding an end to the legislation and also criticising Majithia and by inference, the CKD.<sup>23</sup> On 30 October, the Council addressed two fresh amendments acceptable to Sikhs siding with the CKD. First, the act would not apply to those 'not professing the Sikh religion,' thus permitting anyone calling themselves Sikhs to perform *anand*. Legislative debate clearly recognised that the term Sikh 'includes the sehjdharis, keshadharis and all those who believe in the teachings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their religion.' Also clause 5 reintroduced earlier wording, and 'personal law' was changed to 'customary law,' a position recommended by Sikh resolutions. The CKD and the Sikh press generally heralded the new act as a victory, but interestingly, the Punjab Lieutenant Governor, Louis Dane, while supporting the legislation, had a different perspective. Much of the agitation had been 'worked up' and the 'silent masses' had not spoken. Also he portrayed the act as a 'compromise between the views of the more advanced reformers and the ultra-conservative section.'<sup>24</sup>

Raising an issue, mobilising opinion, and then working out a compromise intended to widen support and prevent further divisions – these were hallmarks of CKD strategy reflected in the *anand* proceedings. A second and equally controversial issue that threatened the unity of the community and also challenged the authority of the CKD occurred four years later in the form of the Rikabganj controversy.

In May 1913, the British removed a stone wall around the Gurdwara Rikabganj in New Delhi in compliance with engineering plans for areas neighbouring the new Viceregal residency. The Chief Commissioner, W. M. Hailey, was aware of potential Sikh sensitivity concerning the shrine, a small structure sacred to the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur, and vetoed a more comprehensive proposal to level the site. Instead, he annexed part of the village Raisina where the small building and grounds were located, and in

<sup>22</sup> One of the best critiques is Sewa Ram Singh letter, 5 Sept. 1909, KA.

<sup>23</sup> Reports in KS, KA, Sept.-Oct. 1909.

<sup>24</sup> Reports in KA, 9, 30 Oct. 1909.



compensation deposited approximately Rs.40,000 in a trust held by Gurdwara authorities.<sup>25</sup>

The resulting Sikh protests were important for at least two reasons. First, the mobilisation of Sikh opinion marked the beginning of a decade of Sikh militancy focussed on religious institutions. From the onset, the government appreciated the danger of Sikh alienation and tried to address Sikh concerns and restore a pattern of loyalty. Secondly, the agitation brought to forefront a small but increasingly vocal group of leaders hostile to the British and to the CKD's inadequate responses. The government and the CKD successfully managed the resulting rhetoric and mass meetings, but just barely. As usual, the CKD claimed victory amidst growing signs of its embattled claim to be the spokesman for the community.

What started as condemnation of British policy soon grew into a campaign aimed at the CKD's reputed policy of appeasement and loyalty at any cost. An astute politician, Hailey got Raja Daljit Singh to develop support. The CKD initially cooperated, circulating a pamphlet reviewing the history of the project and suggesting that no damage had been done. It also despatched a trusted lieutenant and lawyer, Sewaram Singh from Rawalpindi, to investigate and begin negotiations with Hailey in order to develop a compromise ending the anti-British agitation.<sup>26</sup> These efforts, combined with a British misinformation campaign, only further inflamed the resistance of militants centred in Lyallpur. Since the 1907 Chenab Colony disturbances, Sikhs led by Master Tara Singh, headmaster of a Khalsa high school, and his associates such as Harchand Singh criticised the British and the 'sarkari' CKD on matters such as management of Khalsa College. Now they launched a broad and effective attack. Harchand Singh visited Delhi and wrote a scathing tract highlighting CKD complicity in an affront to Sikh sacred institutions. The charges evoked sympathetic meetings and protests throughout the Punjab.<sup>27</sup>

The beleaguered CKD tried to regain its footing by declaring that it could not speak for Sikhs until the panth had registered an opinion. Before that process could occur, the April Sikh Educational Conference meeting in Jullundur became a battleground. Lyallpur militants tried to introduce a resolution calling for the complete restoration of the shrine, and when ruled

<sup>25</sup> Sources in Rikabgaj include the following: Harjot Oberoi, 'From Gurdwara Rikabganj to the Viceregal Palace', *Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. 14 (1908), pp. 182-98; Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in Delhi* (New Delhi, Associated, 1972), pp. 198-220; KA, 17 Jan, 17 Feb., 1914.

<sup>26</sup> Oberoi and Sangat Singh evaluate British strategy although their interpretations differ on some points.

<sup>27</sup> Background on Lyallpur leaders in *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 3, pp. 501-2, 66-67, 312-15; Vol. 2, pp. 226-7. Also discussion, KD, 14 July, 25 Sept., 1909.

compensation deposited approximately Rs.40,000 in a trust held by Gurdwara authorities.<sup>25</sup>

The resulting Sikh protests were important for at least two reasons. First, the mobilisation of Sikh opinion marked the beginning of a decade of Sikh militancy focussed on religious institutions. From the onset, the government appreciated the danger of Sikh alienation and tried to address Sikh concerns and restore a pattern of loyalty. Secondly, the agitation brought to forefront a small but increasingly vocal group of leaders hostile to the British and to the CKD's inadequate responses. The government and the CKD successfully managed the resulting rhetoric and mass meetings, but just barely. As usual, the CKD claimed victory amidst growing signs of its embattled claim to be the spokesman for the community.

What started as condemnation of British policy soon grew into a campaign aimed at the CKD's reputed policy of appeasement and loyalty at any cost. An astute politician, Hailey got Raja Daljit Singh to develop support. The CKD initially cooperated, circulating a pamphlet reviewing the history of the project and suggesting that no damage had been done. It also despatched a trusted lieutenant and lawyer, Sewaram Singh from Rawalpindi, to investigate and begin negotiations with Hailey in order to develop a compromise ending the anti-British agitation.<sup>26</sup> These efforts, combined with a British misinformation campaign, only further inflamed the resistance of militants centred in Lyallpur. Since the 1907 Chenab Colony disturbances, Sikhs led by Master Tara Singh, headmaster of a Khalsa high school, and his associates such as Harchand Singh criticised the British and the 'sarkari' CKD on matters such as management of Khalsa College. Now they launched a broad and effective attack. Harchand Singh visited Delhi and wrote a scathing tract highlighting CKD complicity in an affront to Sikh sacred institutions. The charges evoked sympathetic meetings and protests throughout the Punjab.<sup>27</sup>

The beleaguered CKD tried to regain its footing by declaring that it could not speak for Sikhs until the panth had registered an opinion. Before that process could occur, the April Sikh Educational Conference meeting in Jullundur became a battleground. Lyallpur militants tried to introduce a resolution calling for the complete restoration of the shrine, and when ruled

<sup>25</sup> Sources in Rikabgaj include the following: Harjot Oberoi, 'From Gurdwara Rikabganj to the Viceregal Palace', *Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. 14 (1908), pp. 182-98; Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in Delhi* (New Delhi, Associated, 1972), pp. 198-220; KA, 17 Jan, 1917.

<sup>26</sup> Oberoi and Sangat Singh evaluate British strategy although their interpretations differ on some points.

<sup>27</sup> Background on Lyallpur leaders in *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 3, pp. 501-2, 66-67, 312-15; Vol. 2, pp. 226-7. Also discussion, KD, 14 July, 25 Sept., 1909.



out of order, temporarily disrupted the proceedings with shouts and left in disgust. Majithia then made a statement clarifying the CKD position. On the 'most delicate affair,' he said the CKD was only a servant of the panth, and would act when a special meeting of Sikh representatives decided on a course of action.<sup>28</sup>

Preparing for the summit, the *Khalsa Advocate* emphasised that opponents wanted their own diwans and attacked the CKD unfairly:

So long as the Dewan works according to the dictates of the Panth, its position is unassailable. Should it follow the opinion of any particular section or individual of the Panth, it will be difficult to uphold its status.<sup>29</sup>

It also noted that Lyallpur had been the center of violent agitation, and now must play a constructive role in reaching a settlement. Tara Singh should address the sorry state of Lyallpur institutions rather than creating friction.

On 14 May, two hundred and fifty delegates from the takhts, CKD, Singh Sabhas, princely states and even foreign visitors met at the Amritsar Town Hall. Despite subsequent charges of a rigged meeting, a review of those attending suggests a representative assortment of leaders with diverse background and commitments. From the outset, however, the CKD set up procedures for discussion and voting designed to insure a positive outcome. With Sardar Arur Singh, head of the Darbar Sahib presiding, Majithia presented a request from the Lyallpur Youngmen's Association to transfer Rikabganj decisions to that body, and not surprisingly, the meeting almost unanimously agreed to leave matters to the CKD. In a tightly controlled debate, the delegates voted on several resolutions. They asked that 'loyal Sikh subjects' be given access to all Delhi gurdwaras without restrictions, and requested government aid to improve the gurdwara grounds. A Khalsa Committee to manage Delhi gurdwaras should be established, with four members from Delhi and three from outside. On the most controversial issue, the meeting said that all land should remain attached to the gurdwara and the enclosure be reconstructed in as close to the original shape as possible. The meeting thus endorsed a moderate and compromise position, clearly designed to maintain good working relations with the British.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Background in KA, 25 Apr. 1914, subsequent correspondence.

<sup>29</sup> Documents, KA, 6 June 1914. also letter from Lyallpur organisations, 30 May 1914.

<sup>30</sup> Correspondence, editorials, KA, 20 June 1914. On politics and implications for CKD, reports and editorials, KA, 4, 11 July 1914. On divisions, a key editorial 'Our Defective Sikh Organisations', KA, 23 May 1914.



When dissidents held counter meetings in Lahore and set up a new journal, the *Urdu Sikh Review* in Delhi, to criticise the CKD, the British played a decisive role in temporarily undercutting the and also legitimising the CKD's authority. Demonstrating its usual balance of coercion and conciliation, the government attacked extremism by confiscating the security of the *Khalsa Akhbar* financed by radical Sikhs and then responded positively to CKD proposals.<sup>31</sup> All the resolutions would be honoured with some flexibility required in terms of alignment of roads and compensation arrangements. Sikhs and the new Gurdwara Committee would be consulted at every stage.

World War One postponed fresh confrontations with opponents as the CKD buttressed its position through wartime efforts and the beginning of negotiations over proposed new reforms. At the very time that its political manoeuvres were coming under intensive fire, however, the CKD's moderate attempts at religious reform and community self-strengthening fuelled another and potentially more inflammable opposition. If political opponents still remained disorganised, not so the challenge to the Diwan's positions on Sikh rituals and identity. The Singh Sabha Bhasaur and a small but potent network of like-minded Singh Sabha activists provided an alternative vision of Sikhism and highlighted the ideological controversies either ignored or sidestepped by the CKD.

### **The Bhasauris and the Panch Khalsa Diwan challenge**

The Singh Sabha effort to develop a modern Sikhism based on tradition but combining new elements judged essential for survival marked the first serious engagement over many issues in Sikh public life. In the 1890s, the Lahore Diwan drew much of its support from Malwa, specifically, the princely states and the districts of Ferozepur and Ludhiana. Strident propaganda, public demonstrations sustained institution-building occurred in the region. Closely aligned with Lahore activists were emerging leaders such as Bhai Takht Singh, Sant Attar Singh Mastuana, Kahan Singh Nabha, and Teja Singh Bhasaur. Working together in diwans and intellectual projects, this group helped frame discourse on the nature of Sikh identity.

Teja Singh quickly emerged as a leading advocate for a radical Singh Sabha position. Originally Narain Singh, he studied with a local religious leader, entered government schools and finally became an overseer in Patiala state. In 1893, he produced a version of the Sikh maryada (guide to ritual and daily practice) and founded a Singh Sabha in Bhasaur, a small village close to

<sup>31</sup> Oberoi captures the spirit and details of British strategy in 'From Gurdwara Rikabganj'. Also the perspective of Randhir Singh, Trilochan Singh (ed.) *Autobiography of Bhai Randhir Singh* (Ludhiana, Randhir Singh Publishing House, c.1972), pp. xxv-xxxii.



the town of Patiala. He then went on a pilgrimage and lecture tour, received *amrit*, was renamed Teja Singh, and launched a forty year career of preaching, writing, and public controversy.<sup>32</sup>

Teja Singh became the focal point for Malwa activism. Driven by obsession with spreading *gurmata* and questioning traditions prevalent in Sikh thought and practice, he pursued projects and ideas that sometimes overrode friendships, destroyed relationships, and offended those around him. *Kalmi Tasvir*, a collection of letters and anecdotes edited by an associate, Lal Singh, mirrors the emotional ups and downs of his life. As Lal Singh notes in the introduction, Teja Singh devoted himself to stimulating debate and 'religious wars.'<sup>33</sup> The Bhasaur Singh Sabha became his base, with ensuing ties to like-minded groups in Africa, North America and the Far East. He received funds from scattered Singh Sabhas, but drew heavily for support from Malwa and especially grants from Patiala state.

Teja Singh's message and programs expanded over time, often elaborating and refining earlier Tat Khalsa views. Sikhism was in danger. External threats from the Arya Samaj and Muslims had to be confronted, but from Teja Singh's perspective, the real dangers lay within contemporary Sikhism itself. He had a simplistic view of Sikh history and tradition, an unbroken and distinct Sikh identity grounded in the words and actions of Guru Gobind Singh. In the last century, Sikhism had become adulterated by *dhillar* (lazy) Sikhs who preached *milgobhi* (mixed up) doctrines incorporating Hinduism. Instead of pursuing the path of the Gurus, *gurmata*, they turned their back on the sacred Guru Granth Sabha and instead propagated a false or *manmata* view of Sikhism. These real enemies of the panth had to be confronted if Sikhism were to regain its former pristine way of life. Running through Teja Singh's numerous writings were attacks on opponents declared *tankhahi* (guilty of misconduct and put under penalty demanding repentance). Among their greatest sins were compromise with local traditions and an improper mixing of *sahajdharis* with the true Khalsa, *amritdharis*, who must lead all Sikh activities. The implications of such a message? Sikhs had a mission from God to spread *gurbani* through preaching, *prachar*, at any cost. They must preach a fundamental message of radical equality. Men and women were equal, caste should be renounced, rituals should be purified, education for women along correct lines should be a

<sup>32</sup> Sources on Teja Singh include numerous tracts and institutional reports, several hagiographic biographies, and two important works, Lal Singh, *Kalmi Tasvir* (Chandigarh, n.p., 1965); Lal Singh, *Itihas Panch Khalsa Diwan* (Bhasaur, Panch Khalsa Diwan, 1967). Also, article in *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, Vol. 4, pp. 335-6.

<sup>33</sup> *Kalmi Tasvir*, p. 4. Also discussion of ideas and approaches to institutions in Barrier, 'Sikh Public Life in the Punjab', in Kenneth Jones (ed.), *Religious Controversy in British India*, pp. 217-19.



priority, and finally, anyone including outcastes who were willing to undergo preparation and Sikh discipline should be baptised and accepted as full members of the panth.

The earliest activities of the Bhasauris, as they came to be known, involved support for initiatives from the Lahore Singh Sabha. Fully engaging in the debate over 'who is a Sikh?', they interacted with Kahan Singh and helped sponsor his ideas and publications, most notably *Ham Hindu Nahin* (the Bhasaur Singh Sabha held the copyright on the various editions of that key Tat Khalsa document).<sup>34</sup> They also set up and attended diwans throughout Malwa and collaborated with Ditt Singh. His death, the demise of Lahore zeal, and the rise of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, however, led Teja Singh and his associates to pursue a more independent and increasingly Tat Khalsa program.

Between 1901 and 1904, the Bhasauris expanded and began to routinise and publicise their views. In February of 1901, Teja Singh organised a massive two-day diwan that drew approximately four thousand Sikhs to Bhasaur.<sup>35</sup> Teja Singh prepared for this diwan and a follow-up at Ferozepur by circulating questions and a draft agenda in advance. After prayers and lectures, the assembly then debated and reached decisions on specific issues. For example, one resolution declared *tankhahi* any Sikh having sexual relations outside the marriage, not just the traditional injunction about relations with Muslim women. Since Hindus manipulated Sikhs in the last census and made fun of their quiescence, in the future, religion should be registered clearly as 'Khalsa' and the community, 'Sikh.' Women should wear no ornaments, and if given pahul, receive the same ritual as men (using the sword (*khanda*) rather than the dagger to stir the *amrit*), and then wear all symbols including turbans. Attacking some Sikh organisations converting Muslims in a *shuddhi* ceremony, ('cleansing' linked to the Arya Samaj), the Diwan supported conversion under strict conditions and labelled the activity *amrit prachar*. Much debate centred on how to integrate rahtias and other low-caste Sikhs. Initially they should be included in meetings and worship services, and after changing marriage and personal habits, they should receive *amrit*, and then marry and dine with other Sikhs. Conversely, bringing unreformed untouchables into the Khalsa Panth only for strategic reasons would create havoc and division, and was *manmat*.

At the same time, Bhasaur Sikhs became involved in the negotiations resulting in the formation of the CKD. Teja Singh attended planning sessions,

<sup>34</sup> Information on Kahan Singh's contributions interspersed in *Itihas* and *Kalmi Tasvir*. Also background in Barrier, 'Sikh Public Life', pp. 215-17.

<sup>35</sup> *Khalsa Diwan Bhasaur February 23-25, 1901 Gurmata, Faisale* (Bhasaur, Teja Singh, 1901); *Khalsa Diwan Ferozepur Gurmata Ate Faisale, September 14-15, 1901* (Bhasaur, Teja Singh, 1901).



offered *ardas* at the Diwan's first meeting, and served on the Diwan's Religion Subcommittee.<sup>36</sup> Then the relationship between the CKD and Bhasaur rapidly disintegrated. The major reason involved divergent visions of Sikhism and the future of the community. The CKD wanted to consolidate Singh Sabha successes, construct a modern process of self-strengthening and participation that would incorporate a maximum numbers of Sikhs, and compromise on key issues so as to heal divisions and prevent dissipation of resources. The Bhasauris, however, wanted to expand the Tat Khalsa agenda, not only defining in detail the nature of Sikh identity but publicising that ideology and attacking opponents. Sikhism would survive and prosper not by the actions of a large assortment of Sikhs acting on half-hearted and *milgobhi* principles but only with the leadership of dedicated *amritdhari* Sikhs on a true Khalsa path.

The events surrounding the famous 1903 diwan at Bakapur, a small village near Phillaur, highlighted the emerging struggle between the Tat Khalsa remnants and the CKD. Teja Singh and the Bhasauris had been converting Muslims and low caste Hindus since 1894. In 1901, Takht Singh of Ferozepur brought to Teja Singh's notice a Muslim family whose father, Karim Baksh, had become involved in Sikhism and wished to convert. Teja Singh investigated and then attempted to call a large diwan in late 1902 to herald the ceremony. Resistance from Amritsar Sikhs, including Vir Singh and Vazir Singh (proprietors of the *Khalsa Samachar*), emerged, with opponents suggesting that the process should be slowed down and incorporated into a broader campaign headed by the CKD. When Teja Singh refused, he had difficulty in finding a publisher for printed announcements, followed by disruptions at the meeting that prevented the conversion.<sup>37</sup>

Teja Singh persevered by sending a jatha to evaluate the sincerity of Karim Baksh and his family. After building support from numerous Sikh organisations, he announced a second diwan on 13-14 June, 1903. Thousands attended the mass conversion of 35 individuals including the Muslim family and subsequent Sikh activists such as Randhir Singh. The sermons and speeches also highlighted the Bhasaur agenda, focussing on the need for conversion and the spread of *amrit*, attention to women's potential contributions, and a full discussion of follow-up activities.

<sup>36</sup> Resolutions and discussion of CKD in proceedings of the Ferozepur and Bhasaur Singh Sabhas; also *Khalsa Diwan Ferozepur Salana Report, September 1904* (Bhasaur, Teja Singh, 1904).

<sup>37</sup> Reviewed in Harbans Singh, 'The Bakapur Diwan', in *Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. 9 (1975), p. 332; *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* Vol. 1, pp. 259-61. Bhasaur perspective in *Vir Sudhar Pattar* (Bhasaur, n.p., 1903); *Kalmi Tasvir*, pp. 9, 40-8.



Bakapur strengthened Teja Singh's commitment to pursue an aggressive agenda and to challenge the CKD. The year of tension and controversy fanned his distrust of the Amritsar group, to whom he attributed pain endured by his close associate, Ditt Singh, and the demise of the strident *Khalsa Akhbar*. He came to see the CKD and its publicists, most notably Vir Singh, as city folk who had taken over a grassroots Singh Sabha movement based on village values and local activism. How could betrayers of Sikh principles, who utilised 'modern' techniques of manipulation, sowing discord, and hatching secret plots be stopped? The answer involved constant engagement over issues, public fights, and exposure of 'un-Sikh' activities.<sup>38</sup>

For the next four years, the Bhasauris mobilised their troops. They wrote articles to Sikh journals, posed difficult questions regarding history and Sikh boundaries, and conducted substantial diwans at least twice a year that attempted to legitimise specific mandates through debate and consensus. Sometimes up to two thousand Sikhs met and discussed issues for days at a time. Teja Singh believed *gurnat* rested upon working toward unanimity. In his worldview, liars ultimately will be defeated, and majorities are not always right. Panthic matters must be determined by consensus among the only true Sikhs, the Khalsa Singhs. Were decisions right just because twenty fools were on one side and ten true Sikhs on the other? A few dedicated Sikhs would succeed against thousands of *manmat* Sikhs. His arguments involved references to bold action by the later Gurus, martyrdom, and resistance to oppression.<sup>39</sup>

On 13 April 1907, the Bhasauris helped establish the Panch Khalsa Diwan [PKD] or Khalsa Parliament at Damdama Sahib in western Malwa, a shrine Teja Singh had declared the fifth takht years earlier. With Sant Attar Singh Mastuana presiding, the large diwan voted on resolutions and in general, celebrated the creation of a new activist organisation intent on challenging the CKD in matters temporal and spiritual. Moving almost immediately to Bhasaur, the PKD served as a vehicle for Teja Singh and his colleagues, who controlled the agenda and meetings, and based its program increasingly on the words and deeds of Guru Gobind Singh. For example, at its third meeting in 1910, the Diwan claimed that only the naive 'toadies' of the CKD thought it to be three years old. Rather, the PKD had existed in some form for two hundred and twelve years, the direct ancestor of the initial creation of the Khalsa.<sup>40</sup> As usual, a declaration of principles was read aloud amidst loud accolades: all world religion should be based on the Japji Sahib and love of the Granth and Gurus, Sikhs must follow the Khalsa rahit

<sup>38</sup> *Kalmi Tasvir*, pp. 27-31, 39-44, 52-3; also documents and review of events in *Itihas*.

<sup>39</sup> *Itihas*, pp. 154-6. Also, letter to Takht Singh, 12 January, 1920, in *Kalmi Tasvir*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Quotes and extended discussion in *Samachar Ate Apil, 212 Meeting, Panch Khalsa Diwan, Khalsa Parliament, 17th Meeting Singh Sabha Bhasaur* (Bhasaur, Teja Singh, 1910).



('orthodox' rituals and lifestyle) and receive *amrit*. Moreover, they should preach their religion everywhere, maintain loyalty to 'our parent', the government, learn Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script, and adopt *dasvand* or tithing.

The numerous Sants, jathas, and Malwa groups attending the sessions then voted on familiar resolutions including marriage arrangements and widow re-marriage, and fresh topics including the demand that only *amritdhari* Sikhs (both male and female) could be joined by *anand*, denunciation of any representation of the Gurus in dramas or in pictorial form, and the call for a special committee to evaluate the Kartarpur Granth and the establishment of guidelines for publishing only correct books of *gurbani*. At the same time, the diwan reorganised its management structure, establishing a twenty-five member executive committee with officers named in a perceived Khalsa fashion: President, Jathedar; Vice President, Mit Jathedar, Secretary, Sevak. All decisions in meetings, large and small, must be unanimous. Members of the PKD should celebrate the birth and death days of all Gurus and a designated group of martyrs, plus Visakhi, and birthdays of the King and ruler of Patiala.

The 1910 diwan also highlighted the most highly explosive PKD initiative, the emerging struggle between the PKD and the CKD over *rahit*, Sikh rituals and everyday practices. Teja Singh already had prepared a revision of his earlier work on *rahitnamas* in close collaboration with Giani Bagh Singh Peshawar, Randhir Singh, Kahan Singh and Sant Attar Singh (who supposedly served as jathedar for the project and signed a draft before publication). Moreover, since 1904, the Bhasauris had sent resolutions and questions about *rahit* to the CKD and received no answers. Now they challenged Amritsar to take steps to prove its leadership by taking stands on controversial matters and most pointedly, circulating a Khalsa Dharma Maryada Prakash. From the Bhasaur perspective, a final definition of *gurmat* was the most important task facing Sikhs. The CKD had been discussing the matter for sometime, and if it could not bring the project to fruition, the PKD would fill the gap.<sup>41</sup>

Sundar Singh Majithia and his colleagues indeed had been struggling with the growing challenge from Bhasaur and elsewhere to resolve details about Sikh identity. Publishers and authors had been admonished to correct mistakes written about Sikh history and to standardise versions of the printed Granth, but most *rahit* issues had been transferred to the Religion Committee which generally either did not produce final decisions or did so in piecemeal

<sup>41</sup> *Itihas*, pp. 101-2. Also resolutions in *Ferozepur Report 1904* and discussion in KA, 22 Jan. 1908.



fashion.<sup>42</sup> The reason for the hesitancy was simple. A full and open debate over Sikh boundaries would be destructive, as evidenced by the uproar over *anand*, and divert attention and resources away from the major task at hand, mobilising Sikhs in worthwhile self-help projects such as orphanages and schools.

In order to maintain its legitimacy as the spokesmen for all Sikhs, however, the CKD had to engage with ideological opponents. In 1906, for example, it began discussions with Bhai Sardul Singh, a scholar associated with Singh Sabha history and religious projects since the 1880s, concerning a possible 'sanskrit vidhi', a guide to practices. In November 1906, a special 'correct *gurbani*' subcommittee was established with the stated purpose of working with Sardul Singh and research materials submitted by Karam Singh 'Historian.' Vir Singh led much of the discussion, analysing emerging issues about practices including which scriptures were appropriate for ceremonies that concluded a complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.<sup>43</sup> For the next few months, the numerous and prickly questions from Teja Singh and his associates either were sent to committees or referred to the four takhts for a decision. In the fall of 1907, Teja Singh forced a detailed but quite private discussion on the role of *sahajdhari*s in ceremonies and other issues disturbing the managing committee. Matters reached a head in October 1910. Responding to letters from the PKD, the leadership addressed the issue of *rahit* in an open General Committee meeting. The group decided to create a subcommittee to prepare a draft and circulate it among Sikhs, with the goal of publishing a definitive work. The committee included Vir Singh, Takht Singh, Trilochan Singh, Jodh Singh, and Teja Singh Bhasaur.<sup>44</sup>

The CKD attempted to develop a document both specific and yet avoiding matters that might attract attack and disunity, but to no avail. At every step, Teja Singh refused to cooperate and criticised the process and initial results. From the Bhasaur perspective, all discussions should be public and any material authorised had to result from a panthic decision, defined by the PKD as a mass meeting of all Sikh religious and intellectual leaders.

<sup>42</sup> KS regularly published reports on inquiries and gave references and advice about ceremonies, marriage rituals, and handling of scriptures. Most official CKD discussions led to referrals (takhts, subcommittees) although occasionally the body issued suggestions or a guarded opinion.

<sup>43</sup> CKD, 14 Oct., 18 Nov., 1906.

<sup>44</sup> KA, 14 Mar. 1908, subsequent correspondence. CKD, 18 Nov. 1906, 13 Jan. 1907, 3 Nov. 1907, 23 Oct. 1910, and General Committee meeting, CKD, 30 Oct. 1910.



Nevertheless, after several failed attempts, the CKD published in March 1915 the *Gurmat Prakash: Bhag Sanskar*, a collection of decisions on ritual and Sikh identity.<sup>45</sup>

As feared, Teja Singh went on the attack immediately. An assortment of large diwans and publications charged the CKD with attempting to betray the Singh Sabha mission by incorporating Hindu assumptions and practice into Sikhism. Sarcastically thanking Amritsar for finally heeding PKD instructions to complete the work, the Bhasauris criticised procedures and noted that the dozens of individuals who approved the document often were not *amritdhari*, smoked, and followed non-*gurmat* practices. Also the title was inappropriate, it should have been 'Khalsa Maryada Prakash.' In summary, the work did not represent the Khalsa tradition but rather *milgobhi* doctrines. If anyone accepted the findings, they must be labelled *tankhahi* and removed from the Khalsa.<sup>46</sup>

Dozens of specific criticisms circulated widely and were discussed in diwans throughout Malwa. One persistent theme involved the permissive nature of CKD document. In cases where customs were not covered or perhaps controversial, individuals could follow current custom. The PKD said this created a loophole that would allow Sikhs to incorporate Hindu or caste assumptions in everyday practice. Responding to 'lax' approaches to reading the Granth, naming ceremonies, and *anand* marriage, the PKD argued that all of the *panj piyaris* (the five Sikhs involved in a ceremony) should share responsibilities and not permit a 'jathedar' to dominate the service, warned that only fashionable names would be chosen if flexibility were extended in naming rituals, and replaced loose rules about engagement with a strict regime lowering costs and simplifying wedding procedures. The Bhasauris also claimed that the Sanskar volume legitimised existing Hindu practices including excessive wailing during death ceremonies and 'Hinduised' handling of sacred texts.

Although CKD supporters rallied, the organisation backed away from an aggressive defence. The volume never came before the Educational Conference or annual meetings for validation, nor was there an attempt to claim panthic authority. The PKD kept pushing, however, holding a series of substantial diwans in Malwa and then Majha that called for total boycott of

<sup>45</sup> Few if any discussions of the project are found in CKD minutes. KA, KS printed requests for opinion, but how the final draft was prepared and by whom is unclear. W. H. McLeod currently is preparing a study that evaluates the content of several more recent rahit maryada documents, including that of the two competing diwans.

<sup>46</sup> *Pritham Bhag, Salana Diwan Samachar, July 1916* (Bhasaur, PKD, 1916). The most detailed attack on the CKD document is *Milgobha Sudhar* (Bhasaur, PKD, c.1917).



shops of Sikhs linked to tobacco and denounced *sahajdharis* and their friends as non-Sikhs who preferred money and fame to love of Khalsa traditions.<sup>47</sup>

By 1917, Teja Singh and his group took the next logical step to cleanse Sikhism of any *manmat* elements in the form of printing new editions of the Guru Granth Sahib without separating the words and omitting the *ragmala* section supposedly written by a Muslim, Alam. Earlier Singh Sabha debates had focussed on historical documents and competing versions of Sikh tradition including heated exchanges over *rahitnamas* and the Dasam Granth of Guru Gobind Singh. The radical Tat Khalsa approach had emphasised purification of central texts so as to remove ambiguities and define a distinct Sikh identity. This involved discussion on possible differentiation between the words of the Gurus and material from other sources in the Guru Granth Sahib, although most arguments focussed on competing versions rather than actual attempts to change the sacred text.<sup>48</sup> Since approximately 1901, the Bhasauris and later the PKD had propagated the message that existing versions of the Granth were adulterated by non-Sikh writings. Only *gurbani* was permitted, and any sections such as *ragmala* linked to Muslim traditions thus must be exorcised.<sup>49</sup> As typically happened, what the PKD did was to address a controversial matter, reach a decision, and then take decisive action without regards for consequences.

In 1917 and 1918, *ragmala* and related issues led to a war of words and physical confrontation. The episode involved not just a perceived sacrilegious act by the PKD, but also the underlying principle of who could speak for the Sikhs and implement sanctions. Some of the first salvos came from another enemy of the CKD, Chanda Singh and his militant group who used two papers, the *Panth Sevak* and the *Khalsa Akhbar*, to point out the CKD's weakness and perhaps complicity in the *ragmala* decision. For years, these CKD opponents had been attacking Sundar Singh and associates on everything from mal-administration of orphanages and preaching jathas to ineffective policies concerning the Sikh political future.<sup>50</sup> As Sikh organisations throughout the world met and denounced Teja Singh's action, the two opposing newspapers and other circulating documents suggested that in fact, the CKD and Vir Singh earlier had supported an edited Granth. The *Khalsa Samachar* and the Diwan responded in unequivocal terms that Teja

<sup>47</sup> Discussion in *Pritham Bhag*, pp. 19-20. A CKD response is *Sachda Prakash* (supplement, KA, 17 Sept. 1918), by Man Singh.

<sup>48</sup> Background in Oberoi, *Construction*. Also tracts and reports of the period surveyed in Barrier, *Sikhs and Their Literature*.

<sup>49</sup> For example, discussion in the reports of the 1901 and 1904 meetings, Bhasaur and Ferozepur. On PKD perspective, *Itihas*, pp. 30-2. Also, *Pahila Bhag*, *Panch Khalsa Diwan* (supplement to *Panth Sewak*, 15 May 1918).

<sup>50</sup> Articles, editorials in KS, 19, 26 July 1917, and during Oct. 1917. The KA also focuses on *ragmala* and attacks on the CKD and Vir Singh throughout 1917.



Singh had acted alone in attacking the panth. Growing pressure and criticism centred on the CKD's inability to deal with the situation. The controversy spread to denunciations of Wazir Hind Press and Vir Singh, who allegedly had helped publish the truncated Granth and also had supported Kahan Singh's earlier works on which the Bhasauris now based their defence.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, CKD appealed to the four takhts and the Maharaja of Patiala to intervene. After a meeting on 2 May 1917, the Akal Takht issued a hukamnama (authoritative order) instructing Teja Singh to come to the Darbar Sahib and explain his actions. Teja Singh refused. He countered that the Takht was in the hands of CKD conspirators, who were raising *ragmala* issues because of his 'hard blows' and their inability to defend a compromise approach to *rahit*.<sup>52</sup> In response to the CKD's formal denunciation on 7 September, 1917, the PKD held a diwan at a fair near Nankana Sahib which declared that *ragmala* was not *gurbani* and thus should be removed from the Granth. Shortly thereafter, the Patiala state demanded that the PKD cease circulating edited versions of the Granth and send printed copies of *ragmala* to those possessing their publication. Patiala carefully avoided taking a side on doctrine and 'blasphemy,' but insisted on the action because Teja Singh allegedly was creating turmoil among Sikhs. He also ordered the PKD to quit referring to itself as 'the Khalsa Parliament.' Again, Teja Singh and the PKD discussed the issue publicly and countered that Patiala had no authority. Although relations with state officials continued to worsen, for the time being, Patiala did not pursue the matter.<sup>53</sup>

The exchanges over *rahit* and *ragmala* reflected several key elements of Sikh life. First, the CKD remained committed primarily to measures strengthening the panth's resources and maintaining good relations with the British. It rejected a radical Tat Khalsa agenda as a danger to maximising resources and Sikh unity. The Diwan had been fairly successful in this mission, with its leaders working closely with the British in expanding Sikh rights and also mobilising Sikhs in a network reaching the villages and communities abroad. On the other side, the PKD had managed to survive and even build its resources despite general hostility toward its strident and now seemingly blasphemous message. The specificity of its views on almost every subject were broadcast and helped define an ideological debate for which many Sikh politicians and intellectuals had no stomach. Thirdly, the conflict in vision and programs illuminates the limited scope of Singh Sabha success.

<sup>51</sup> Discussed in *Pahila Bhag* and *Sambodh Pattar* (Bhasaur, PKD, 1917). Also KA editorials, stories, 19, 26 July 1917.

<sup>52</sup> KS, 26 July, 9 Aug., 1917. Teja Singh response in *Sambodh Pattar* and *Itihas*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>53</sup> *Itihas*, p. 152; *Panch Khalsa Diwan 8th Salana Diwan Da Samachar* (Bhasaur, PKD, c.1918); *Salana Diwan, Gurmata Prakash* (Bhasaur, PKD, c.1918).

No individual or organisation clearly spoke for the Sikhs in major or minor issues despite several claimants and competing approaches. Many aspects of Sikh identity remained controversial and unresolved. Moreover, the Sikh search for an organisation or traditional institutions (such as the takhts and Sikh nobility) with the ability to decide on and implement decisions had proven unsuccessful.

The answers to authority, legitimacy, and the exertion of power among Sikhs took a fresh turn in 1919 with the emergence of new contenders, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee [SGPC] and the Akali Dal. The gurdwara reform movement and the resulting supremacy of a different leadership undercut the CKD's centrality and contributed to the final destruction of Teja Singh and the Bhasauris. In the process, however, the SGPC and the Akalis had to grapple with the same issues addressed by the two organisations they eclipsed: how to maintain unity amidst diversity, a political strategy for a minority community, and the resurrection or creation of new forms of authority and Sikh identity.

### **Gurdwara reforms: fresh approaches to Sikh politics and identity**

Without the zeal, ideological commitment, and organisational skills of the Singh Sabha movement and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the mobilisation and spirit reflected in the 1919-1925 Gurdwara reform effort would be quite different and perhaps impossible. Although sharing a commitment to controlling key Sikh shrines and making them centers of Sikh identity and activism, the PKD and the CKD earlier had disagreed over goals and methods. The Bhasauris and like-minded radicals of the Tat Khalsa persuasion believed in stirring public opinion and then open confrontation with those who refused to give way to organised pressure. Well before 1919, the PKD and others had sent jathas, organised groups, to try and take over shrines held by non-Singhs and exhibiting *manmat* in ceremonies and financial matters. The CKD pursued three different approaches: court cases concerning special shrines, reforming and winning over pujaris and mahants and educating their children, and securing British assistance in areas of administration and procedure. Propaganda and sporadic action did not lead to immediate success, but meetings and communications on the subject did raise the consciousness of Sikhs and thereby laid the groundwork for new types of activism.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Background on early stages of the reform movement in Rajiv Kapur, *Sikh Separatism* (New Delhi, Vikas, rep. 1989); Teja Singh, *Gurdwara Reform Movement and Sikh Awakening* (Jullundur, Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee, 1922). On PKD role, *Itihas*, pp. 75-80. On the Akalis and Sikh politics, Sukhmani Bal, *Politics of the Central Sikh League* (Delhi, Books & Books, 1990); Mohinder Singh, *The Akali Movement* (New Delhi, Macmillan India, 1978).



Both participated in the initial episodes of the reform movement. Bhasauris joined in several morchas, while Majithia headed the first SGPC and attempted to work out compromises with the British that would pave the way for peaceful turnover of shrines to Sikh organisations. The breakdown of that strategy, combined with radical demands strengthened by atrocities against peaceful Sikh demonstrators, quickly marginalised the CKD politically and led to Majithia and associates being labelled government agents. Although the CKD continued to send memorials and sustained key programs such as the Educational Conference, its leaders went in different directions. Jodh Singh and others became more radical, and Majithia formed new political parties and alliances seen by many Sikhs as undercutting the community.<sup>55</sup>

Despite infighting over goals and strategy, the SGPC headed by the CKD's earlier opponents and the aggressive Akali Dal took center place among Sikhs. The SGPC had the primary mission of freeing gurdwaras through peaceful means and then creating an organisational infrastructure to centralise supervision of centers of religious and temporal power. *Sahajdharis*, *kesdharis*, and *amritdharis* worked closely together in the morchas and political manoeuvring, although it was understood that leadership, as with the CKD, would rest ultimately with *amritdhari* Sikhs. The Akalis focussed on building a political party and meeting threats inside and outside the community. Political alliances often resulted from expediency, such as a vacillating relationship with the Congress. Again prominently *kesdhari* and *amritdhari*, the Akalis attempted to consolidate their political leadership through use of propaganda, public demonstrations, and direct action rather than focussing on ideological or identity issues championed by their predecessors, the Tat Khalsa.<sup>56</sup>

Why then did the Akali Dal in close collaboration with Patiala move against the PKD and Teja Singh in late 1921? Although details surrounding the action remain cloudy, apparently Teja Singh managed to alienate former supporters including the *Panth Sewak* and Attar Singh Mastuana and at the same time launched a series of ill-fated attacks on the SGPC, the Akalis and the Maharaja of Patiala.<sup>57</sup> Using as an excuse rumours of mistreatment of students at the Bhasaur school and a pattern of publication judged dangerous

<sup>55</sup> In addition to sources, footnote 54, useful documents on the CKS in Ganda Singh (ed.) *Some Confidential Papers of the Akali Movement* (Amritsar, SGPC, 1965).

<sup>56</sup> Documents on Akali and SGPC policy in O. P. Ralhan, *Shiromani Akali Dal* (New Delhi, Anmol, 1998); also, review in K. L. Tuteja, *Sikh Politics* (Kurukshetra, Vishal, 1984). The British CID reports in Home Political File 459, 1922 (National Archives of India) and the detailed accounts in the Hailey Papers (India Office Library) provide useful analysis from a colonial viewpoint.

<sup>57</sup> *Itihas*, pp. 23-46. Also, *Bhasaur Benati Pattar* (Amritsar, Gurmat Press, c.1920).



to Sikhism, the Akalis sent a jatha to Bhasaur and seized the PKD headquarters and treasury, allegedly with Patiala's blessing. Teja Singh was forced to ride around on a donkey with a colored face, and then handed to Patiala officials who kept him in jail for almost a year. Also seized were all PKD books, which remained locked up until the 1970s.<sup>58</sup>

The concerted attack destroyed the financial viability and most of the institutional base of the Bhasauris, but Teja Singh kept up an attack on opponents after his release from prison. He launched a fresh round of accusations in 1925, spurred by discussion of the proposed Sikh Gurdwara Act. Besides turning administration of key shrines over to the SGPC, which he despised and labelled an enemy of true Sikhism, the act also institutionalised a definition of Sikh championed by the CKD and subsequent political meetings, the inclusion of *sahajdharis* within the Panth. Teja Singh also criticised the Akalis for working with Gandhi and the Congress, in essence compromising with Hindus and diluting Sikh faith and practice. He warned that the SGPC, openly maintaining caste affiliations, mixing with the cleanshaven, and concerned more with economics than religious ideals, would dominate Sikhism and destroy any vestige of independent jathas and diwans.<sup>59</sup>

The campaign reached a zenith in early 1927 when Teja Singh and a handful of followers attacked the SGPC and the takhts as being partners in political manipulation without concern for Sikh values. The jathedars of the takhts, he claimed, were lackeys of the SGPC and had no legitimacy. Only if Sikhs could hold large representative diwans and elect heads of the takhts and other major institutions would Sikh leaders be considered legitimate. Bhasaur meetings also addressed the '*tankhahia*' Sikh initiatives to join with the Congress. In a future India, there must be a Khalsa Raj and not alliances based on expediency. Teja Singh followed up the challenge with more literature that included changes in Sikh prayers and additional alterations in the Granth.<sup>60</sup>

The final response from an emerging Sikh political élite came quickly. In July 1928, the Gurmat Rahuriti Subcommittee of the SGPC charged Teja Singh with changing *gurbani* and *amrit* ceremonies, and flaunting misguided ideas offensive to Sikhs. On orders from the SGPC, no one should buy any courses, books or other publications from Bhasaur or the PKD, and Teja Singh and his wife Niranjan Kaur were suspended from the Khalsa Panth. A

<sup>58</sup> *Itihas*, pp. 23-46; *Samjhauta Prakash* (c.1922, no. pub. information). Commenting on the event, Teja Singh wrote that the Akalis were 'brave men with empty stomachs' who manipulated the situation, received authorisation from the Akal Takht and then collaborated with Patiala. *Kalmi Tasvir*, p. 79.

<sup>59</sup> *Kalmi Tasvir*, pp. 84-5, 96-7; *Itihas*, pp. 80-2.

<sup>60</sup> *Itihas*, pp. 29-30, 80-1, 154-8.



few days later, on 9 August 1928, each takht issued hukamnamas that separated, or excommunicated, Teja Singh and his wife, and warned any Sikhs from associating with them or their ideas.<sup>61</sup>

Totally isolated, still Teja Singh rejected the actions and continued to write until his death in 1933. He denied the legitimacy of the Akal Takht for two reasons. First, it had been manipulated by its master, the SGPC, and secondly, no Sikh had the right to excommunicate another Sikh, only Akal Parukh could separate Sikhs from the panth. Despite splits and internal struggles within the Bhasaur group, they managed to hold several large meetings after 1928 that denounced the Akalis and SGPC, the takhts, and anyone who disagreed with their expanding list of mandates and resolutions. Claiming to be the legitimate heirs of Guru Gobind Singh, one of their last acts was excommunication of Vir Singh for his *milgobhi* writings and actions.<sup>62</sup>

In retrospect, the CKD and the PKD struggled with the central issues concerning institutions and identity that persist in Sikhism today. The CKD built on select elements from the Tat Khalsa tradition and attempted to consolidate community resources to move Sikhs forward in a rapidly changing political and social system. Its efforts at unity often were frustrated, and Sikhs remained divided along caste, regional and ideological lines. In terms of political strategy, the Diwan argued that the only viable approach for a minority community was collaboration, either with the British or later with other Punjabi communities in a widening political arena.

The centrality of the SGPC and the Akalis did not mean a radical break with the earlier programs of the Singh Sabhas and the CKD. The initial campaigns to free the gurdwaras eventually gave way to political manoeuvring, agitational politics, and management of significant resources. These new leaders also accepted two planks of the CKD political platform, namely, maximising the size and strength of the community by including *sahajdharis* and avoiding divisive discussion of boundaries and ideology. This led to compromise and also occasional alliance with others, such as the Congress, whose support was judged vital for Sikh interests.

The PKD's attempt to project radical Tat Khalsa programs and specific points about Sikh identity failed equally, due in part to its tone and extreme perspectives, but also because Sikhs did not want to address the questions

<sup>61</sup> *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Ailan* 82 (1928); also similar announcements in 1929-33. Akal Takht hukamnama reproduced in Harjinder Singh Dilgeer, *The Akal Takht* (Jullundur, Punjabi Book Company, 1980), pp. 71-2.

<sup>62</sup> *Itihas*, pp. 80-3, 154-58. Also, *Kalmi Tasvir*, pp. 108-112; *Salana Report PKD April 1927* (Bhasaur, S. Karam, 1927).

raised by Teja Singh and shadow supporters including Kahan Singh and others. In the 1930s, the SGPC sanctioned a fresh attempt to pull together a Sikh Rahit Maryada, eventually circulated with some public input, and now accepted as a baseline guide to a Sikh way of life. Again a compromise document, like the 1925 Gurdwara Act, the rahit maryada answered some questions, left grey areas, and did not address others advocated by Tat Khalsa ancestors.<sup>63</sup> The Dasam Granth, *ragmala*, the role of women in Sikhism, caste, marriage, and the role of the SGPC and the takhts – all continue as sources of contention. If alive today, Majithia would be warning of the danger of disunity and the need for toleration, and Teja Singh would be claiming that *milgobhi* and *manmat* traditions still continue to dominate contemporary debate over Sikh identity and politics.

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<sup>63</sup> Background on the rahit maryada and persistent infighting over authority, institutions, and doctrine outlined in Barrier, 'Controversy among North American Sikhs', in *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. 6 (1999), pp. 217-40.